A Quarterly of New Literature

Illinois U Library

ACCENT

EUDORA WELTY: Put Me in the Sky!

HOWARD GRIFFIN: Dialogue with W. H. Auden

RALPH ROBIN: Donald Grenfell

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS: Adam's Ballad

REGINALD L. COOK: Frost as a Parablist

ARTHUR GREGOR

ZYGMUNT HAUPT

HOWARD P. VINCENT

MARTIN SCHOLTEN

ROBERT CREELEY

JAMES BLISH

40 CENTS

AUTUMN, 1949

U. OF I.
LIBRARY

new directions books

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

WILLIAM FAULKNER

ANDRE GIDE

THOMAS MERTON

JAMES JOYCE

HENRY MILLER

HENRY JAMES

FRANZ KAFKA

ALBERT CAMUS

EZRA POUND

ELIO VITTORINI

KAY BOYLE

HENRI MICHAUX

GOETHE

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

KENNETH PATCHEN

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

LOUIS-FERDINAND CELINE

333 sixth avenue, n.y.c.

INDEX TO VOLUME TEN OF ACCENT

George Anthony: *Cage* (poem) ---- 102

Joseph Warren Beach: *And Strangers' Eyes* (poem) ---- 104
Sunset Boulevard (poem) ---- 106

Peggy Bennett: *Blue Daughters* (story) ---- 67

James Blish: *Caesura* (poem) ---- 224
Dies Irae (poem) ---- 225
Song as Song (poem) ---- 32

Morgan Blum: *Train to Cambridge: Michaelmas Term, 1945* (poem) ---- 171

Warren Carrier: *Meaning in the Poetry of Lorca* (article) ---- 159

Reginald L. Cook: *Frost as a Parablist* (article) ---- 33

Robert Creeley: *Gangster* (poem) ---- 28

E. E. Cummings: *Poem* ---- 224

Bobb Davis: *Wake* (poem) ---- 99

Harris Downey: *Caught* (story) ---- 131

Odysseus Elytis: Three Poems (translated by Kimon Friar)
The Age of Blue Memory ---- 220
The Body of Summer ---- 219
Marina of the Rocks ---- 221

Wallace Fowlie: *Eluard's Doctrine of Love* (article) ---- 85

Arthur Gregor: *Poem in IV Parts* ---- 29

Horace Gregory: *Elizabeth at the Piano* (poem) ---- 235
The Night Walker (poem) ---- 234
Spy-Glass (poem) ---- 234

Howard Griffin: *Conversation on Cornelia Street: Dialogue with W. H. Auden* (article) ---- 51

Leo Hamalian: *Mr. Eliot's Saturday Evening Service* (article) ---- 195

Zygmunt Haupt: *Wanda* (story) ---- 42

Ben Johnson: *A Note on Italo Svevo* (article) ---- 189

A. M. Klein: *The Black Panther: A Study in Technique* (article) ---- 139

Dezsö Kosztolányi: *The Train-Robber* (story. translated by Agnes H. Allison) 213

46202

Agnes Macdonald: *The Many Change and Pass* (story) ---- 237

John Frederick Nims: *Adam's Ballad* (poem) ---- 13
A Few Unexpected Tropical Fish (poem) ---- 12
A Quiet Night (poem) ---- 11

F. L. Overcarsh: *The Lighthouse, Face to Face* (article) ---- 107

Louis Pauwels: *Beginning* (story, translated by Daphne Woodward) ---- 124

Kerker Quinn: *Poets Recorded* (article) ---- 61

Ralph Robin: *The Improbable Redemption of Donald Grenfell* (story) ---- 14

M. L. Rosenthal: *Horace Gregory: The Catullus Translations* (article) ---- 175

Howard O. Sackler: *And the Policeman is our Friend* (poem) ---- 158
Shem's Voyage to Ararat (poem) ---- 156
The Ways of Saint and Sepulchre (poem) ---- 157

Martin Scholten: *Though Time Shall Interrupt Again* (poem) ---- 31

Delmore Schwartz: *My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is* (poem) ---- 100

Charles H. Shattuck: *The Spreading Whimsy* (review of *The Lady's Not for Burning* and *Venus Observed* by Christopher Fry) ---- 250

Jo Sinclair: *Night Time* (story) ---- 230

Mortimer Slaiman: *The Fisher-Man* (poem) ---- 101

Wallace Stevens: *The Sick Man* (poem) ---- 156

Italo Svevo: *The Mother* (story, translated by Ben Johnson) ---- 185

Hyman Swetzoff: *Pastoral* (poem) ---- 172
Why Go to a Play (poem) ---- 174

Harry Sylvester: *Plaza des Armas: Lima* (poem) ---- 123

K. P. A. Taylor: *The Calendar* (poem) ---- 155

Bonaventura Tecchi: *The Mules* (story, translated by Ben Johnson) ---- 226

Howard P. Vincent: *From the Melville Archives* (review of *Journal of a Visit to London and the Continent* and *Melville's Billy Budd*) ---- 58

Eudora Welty: *Put Me in the Sky!* (story) ---- 3

Joan White: *In Ice Green Hills* (poem) ---- 222
The Wolf That Was (poem) ---- 223

Sandra Wool: *Weston Revisited* (article) ---- 207

CONTENTS

Eudora Welty: *Put Me in the Sky!* 3

John Frederick Nims: *A Quiet Night* 11

A Few Unexpected Tropical Fish 12

Adam's Ballad 13

Ralph Robin: *The Improbable Redemption of Donald Grenfell* 14

Robert Creeley: *Gangster* 28

Arthur Gregor: *Poem in IV Parts* 29

Martin Scholten: *Though Time Shall Interrupt Again* 31

James Blish: *Song as Song* 32

Reginald L. Cook: *Frost as a Parablist* 33

Zygmunt Haupt: *Wanda* 42

Howard Griffin: *Conversation on Cornelia Street: Dialogue with W. H. Auden* 51

Howard P. Vincent: *From the Melville Archives* (review of *Journal of a Visit to London and the Continent* and *Melville's Billy Budd*) 58

Kerker Quinn: *Poets Recorded* 60

EDITORIAL STAFF: Kerker Quinn, Charles Shattuck, John Schacht, George Scouffas, Allen Hayman, Leon Gottfried, Walter Edens, Kenneth Bennett, Jerry Beaty, Roberta Scouffas, Benjamin Sokoloff, Robert Gard (secretary). Non-resident: Robert Bauer, Donald Hill, Carl Hartman.

ACCENT: Box 102, University Station, Urbana, Illinois. Published quarterly. Subscription: $1.50 a year, $2.50 for two years in the United States (elsewhere $1.75 a year, $2.75 for two years). Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed envelopes. Entered as second-class matter Sept. 26, 1940, at the post office at Urbana, Illinois, under the act of March 3, 1879.

Copyright, 1949, by ACCENT.

SIX GIFT-BOOK SUGGESTIONS

Five Novels of Ronald Firbank

'Valmouth,' 'The Artificial Princess,' 'The Flower Beneath the Foot,' 'Prancing Nigger,' 'The Eccentricities of Cardinal Pirelli.' With a long introduction by Sir Osbert Sitwell.

$5.00 — **With one year of ACCENT ($1.50): $5.25**

The Cantos of Ezra Pound

The complete poem to date (cantos I to 84).

$5.00 — **With one year of ACCENT ($1.50): $5.25**

Accent Anthology

A 687-page selection from the first five years (1940-1945), containing otherwise unavailable work by Katherine Anne Porter, R. P. Blackmur, Henry Miller, Cleanth Brooks, Eudora Welty, Delmore Schwartz, Walter Van Tilburg Clark, Otis Ferguson, Kay Boyle, etc.

$4.00 — **With one year of ACCENT ($1.50): $4.25**

Image and Idea

By Philip Rahv. Fourteen essays on literature (Hawthorne, James, Dostoievski, Tolstoi, Kafka, Miller, Koestler, etc.)

$3.00 — **With one year of ACCENT ($1.50): $3.50**

Nausea

By Jean-Paul Sartre. The pioneer Existentialist novel.

$2.50 — **With one year of ACCENT ($1.50): $3.00**

The Poems of Wilfred Owen

The entire poetic output of an important 20th-century writer. With a memoir and notes by Edmund Blunden.

$1.50 — **With one year of ACCENT ($1.50): $2.25**

Although the above titles may be ordered at any time, delivery by Christmas cannot be promised on orders received later than December 15.

● ● ●

CHRISTMAS GIFT SUGGESTIONS

Readers who are currently on the subscription list may order ACCENT subscriptions for their friends at the special rate of $1.00 for one year (a 50c saving) or $1.75 for two years (a 75c saving).

Please indicate whether the subscriptions should start with the Autumn issue (to be delivered at Christmas) or the Winter issue (ready late in January). In either case, ACCENT will send announcement cards to all recipients of gift subscriptions.

ACCENT
A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE
Volume X, Number 1 Autumn, 1949

EUDORA WELTY:

Put Me in the Sky!

Needle in air, I stopped what I was making. From the window, my lookout on the sea, I saw the whole drove break loose on the beautiful strangers, head over heels with joy.

When I could hear the breathing, and the kicking of stones, I threw open the door. A shaft of light from the zenith struck me, and the wind pulled at my hair. Something else swayed my body outward.

"Welcome!" I said.

As my servants had not spared telling me, it had taken two days and nights for them to make up their minds. Their ship had ridden the shore and they had cooked on the beach in plain view from the clothesyard.

They had all come.

They trooped inside, discovering the smell of my bread — and with such a grunting and frisking at their heels to the very threshold! The pigs behaved presumptuously to them, and to whom were they presumptuous? These star-gazers stumbled on sandy feet over my polished floor, crowding each other, sizing up the household for gifts. They sighted up where the ladder went.

I told them to sit down and make themselves at home, which they did the quickest in the world. I ordered the fire to be fed, and then excused myself to supervise the broth so it would serve weary and agreeable sailors.

While I was at the fire, and the women were pulling the ladle around, they took up an old conversation with themselves, and pulled the stools to their feet. In the expectation of a bath, they looked in

awe at their hands, smiling, but I was counting the trips to the spring and the jars of good oil, and why put up with the women complaining again, for those who had such little time?

With tear-bright eyes they watched me lift the great tray and come circling the room in a wreath of steam, to one by one. Each pair of black-nailed hands swept up the nearest bowl, and the sailors drank. Soon at my heels the first were trotting about.

That moment of transformation, when it happens before the eyes — only the gods really like it! Men and beasts can almost never absorb enough from the wonder to justify it. Except for my being in their midst, swine wouldn't have been recognized in the room at all — and the floor was swaying like a bridge in battle. The first trotted — still sure of the bread — while the last were yet to be served, then the last drank too, and lifting their noses out of the bowls let go and shuttled into the company.

With my wand whistling through the air now, I drove them all outside to join the others — who ran forward, filthily rivalling, but welcoming.

All but one. As I backed into the room, with a final word to my pigs, I felt behind me — almost like a new wand over my head — one man.

"O gods, it has failed me, it's drying up —" Before everything, I think of my power.

Worst of all, he was the very one of them I knew he must be. Turning upon him, I almost collapsed. I did not collapse. For he might only have found, somewhere in the world, some information useful against me for a little while. Or — in spite of appearances — he might be very little of a man, and not inspired to kill me instantly. With each flash of the eyes I knew, at the same time, he'd father a child in me. I fled — as I do from every prophecy I can.

I was behind the big broth kettle. I struck off its lid and tasted the last drop of the broth on my finger. I had thought the taste just right!

The old island women, those servants I support, were shaking their heads. How long will it take them to know the unmagical people are put into the world to justify and serve the magical, not agree with them? I do not tolerate agreement from any soul, I threw the kettle at their withering heels.

The man remained just where he was. His gaze was in the empty corner of the room, and his hand moved across the rushes of a chair.

I went and spoke directly to him.

"Whatever is next, since this much has happened, the important thing now is for you to trust me — and I you. I swear," I told him, and went toward him, "that I mean no harm in the world to you so long as you take me for what I am." For he pleased me. Taking my hand from his breast, I unchained my belt and it slid to the floor, where it lay as if it slept.

"Is that the strongest oath you have?" he asked me. Then we told our names.

"Remember what I've seen you do," he said.

I shut the door to the outside, and bolted it. I said, "You've seen I meant all along to leave *you* free."

At that he sighed and composed himself. I gave him his bath. He sat and dried himself before the fire — carefully, the only mortal man on an island in the sea. I rubbed the oil over his shadowy shoulders, and on the rope of curls in which his jaws were set. The withdrawing women took away his sword, and carried off his tunic to wash.

He had been ready to kill me. Under my palms he was warm and still as the air of a myrtle grove at noon. His limbs were heavy, braced like a sleep-walker's who has wandered, alas, to cliffs above the sea. Whenever I went in front of him, with the fall of my bracelets, he folded his arms about me. His cheeks were grave and his eyes black, put out with seeing puzzles and solutions. From a bright tray before us we drank a little wine, wine simply. We stretched our bodies along my couch, in an alcove, when he had done with a little talking.

Though he slept like a log on falling against the cushion, he soon woke refreshed and opened his arms and eyes at the same moment, as a golden hibiscus startles you all flowers when you have all but forgotten you set it there and are walking in some weedy place apart.

But he would not rise and eat any supper, until I would undo that day's havoc in the pigsty.

I crouched and scrutinized him. "Why don't you eat? Look at me — why?"

He wept.

I pointed out that I had brought his supper in a golden bowl such as my Father must cross in every night — its copy, no less. But he did not want to eat out of it. It was necessary for me to go down in the dark, past the rattling willow grove, to the pigsty, to sort out and bring his friends up again from their muddy labyrinth. I had to pass them back through the doorway as themselves, one by one, with all my authority — while he counted. Then he could look at them

all on their feet before him. Their jaws sank asthmatically, and he said, "Don't you know me?"

Then he sprang from the couch into their embrace. He dressed in a mantle that was brought for him. He heard out the flute players. All of us feasted until the fire was black. When they finished with the feast, the servants had to climb up and put linen on all the beds. And all the length of the ladder again they had to pull, for each bed, a star-gazer, drowsy-kneed, murmuring his way up, after our plain country fare and our island wine.

But for a long time still we sat in my high-up room, and spoke of dreams and omens and premonitions before we slept.

Strange man, as unflinching and as wound-up as I am. His short life and my long one have their ground in common. Passion is our ground, our island — do others exist? Some struggling there are deathless but all are vulnerable. How many visits even we gods must make there bearing shameful wounds, no better off than men or punished beasts, hairy and hoary with danger, always dreaming we must take beauty alive.

His friends all came down with a jump in the morning, as engaged with themselves as they could be. I watched them tag each other, rough-and-tumble before breakfast, regaling each other with "What did I do? No, tell me! How far did I go with it?" and, in a reckless reassurance, imitating the sounds of pigs at each other's back.

For now they were dreamily handsome. I'd certainly made them more attractive than when they came, and younger, while I was about it. But tell me now of one who appreciated it (each kept his glory to himself for secret gloating). Tell me one who looked my way until I brought him his milk and figs. Greed I take for granted, and beyond that I suspected the one driving energy that set going their heads, arms, and legs: it was curiosity. What could I feel less sympathy in? What could bore me more deeply? They even die in curiosity.

My hand shook once, and I spilled the youngest's milk. However long it might be between travelers here, I'd never lost my touch, or failed to be told I am everything as a housekeeper, and to be praised as a cook. But now I had everything to do without praise.

When he came down himself, we devoured a god's breakfast — though all, like the very sausages, was taken for granted. The women, only in my way, said they never dreamed this time the day before of so many for breakfast today — and what about the herd, with no scraps left over? Of course I'm forced to import a great deal, and to

save and count carefully all I have on hand in this lonesome larder, but I cried that I didn't care! I didn't care if I put the household under greater stress for him than I ever dreamed of for myself, even on those lonely dull mornings when the mist wraps the island and hides every path of the sea, and when my heart is black.

But a stir was upon them all from the moment the food gave out. Arms winding each other's shoulders, they strode from the table, stepping on their napkins and tracking the clean floor with honey, and collected outside beneath the sky to talk. There were all of them: he too, in their midst.

Then he returned to me, in my door, glowing with all he had just been saying.

"We must be on our way at once," he said. I watched him stand there, fold his arms, and sink his golden weight on one leg, while the knot of them in the yard attended.

"Thank you for the hospitality you have given us on our hard journey.

"On behalf of us all, I appreciate it.

"You put yourself out for us. I think you may have done too much."

I said, "I undid as much as I did."

"Yes! We have cost you something."

Not to seize him by the heart had made me grind my teeth, but not so much as this. His self-protection never prepared me for being abandoned.

"We've visited you here a full year."

I don't know the meaning of a year. He gave me a pecking, recapitulating kiss, his black beard thrust at me like a shoe.

He turned and told the others, "We'll leave when tomorrow comes." He smiled and lifted his arms and waved at them. Their little knot in the yard came apart and they wandered to shore. They were not so forlorn when they could eat acorns and trot quickly where they would go.

I hadn't noticed how, early and late, the island cicadas drew long sighs like the playing out of all my silver shuttles. This was the time of greatest heat, the Dog Star running with the Sun, though the night could be chilly, with rising wind. The sea the color of honey looked sweet even to the tongue, the salt and vengeful sea. Everbearing grapes ripened again while we sipped at our wine, I had them harvested and trodden, but this wine — I told the women — was to

store. I must consider that my own time is endless, and that I shall need wine endlessly.

Even while wine can get at the memory, I never forget that I must live. So, then, magic is stronger than intoxication, just as the tree is stronger than the little bird that perches in it to sing and fly away.

He reclined by my side and when the Sun had gone down into the sea I gazed where his beard darkened and spread on his cheeks and about his sweet lips, to show me what enchantment can never stay or touch. To kiss that coarseness was to remember that men can die. He sighed at the touch, as if he hid himself.

He wanted sleep, but always he would talk a little longer. His lips moved in a story and I saw his teeth gleaming, while the owl, too, made comment outside. I heard what he, and the owl, said, but it merged with the night. A great deal had been brought to my ears before. Who has *not* seen a horrid man with one eye? And though at this hour this one is blind, give him time. He'll grow another eye — or two. And some one will come along to put it out again. — Out of loneliness I listened, but nothing pertained — only his lips.

Just before dawn, as the Pleiades were rising, I knelt beside him and clasped him to me. He cried out in his sleep, and let fall a word in another language. Some earthbound dream kept him troubled and deprived, yet he did not wake or demand my remedies, but had to dream on. Wearily!

I felt that if I shook him from sleep I might destroy him, unknowing. How much of life he lost with me, beyond what I needed — as the daily fire exhausts its own heat while consuming the seaweed, the driftwood, brightening the chilly hearth — how could I know or conjure? I thought, wistfully, of my father on his divine way, suffering no loss through his steady delight. The wanderer slept now without a sound. Was he dying?

Or was this his evasion, another ruse? I looked an age into that remote face, above the beard's black crescent and the dark curve of the muscle that turned his neck. Though I suspected a cautious herb at the time — and later I drew the story out of him — hadn't he from the first found a way to resist me? And from the moment he'd dared to reproach me like a god, he set out to prove his mortality to me.

I flung myself against his senseless breast. When I let him go, he rolled gently down onto the floor of his sleep, as far below me as some drowned sailor in an old adventure he spoke of.

I know there is a mystery, and it's kept from me, strong as I am.

Only some frailty is able to find it and prick it open — the drop that might fall, the heart that can burst like an island grape. Some frailty: which I alone in the world appear to be without. I long to know where it is, the fatal drop, and how to touch it. But only the frail and mortal know it — the mystery of themselves and of each other. I am certain they know it, and have it locked up inside. Only to possess that one, trifling secret, I would gladly turn myself into a dove for the rest of eternity!

The wind was rising. I went my way over the house to see if all was well and holding together. From the window and from the rooftop I looked out. This was *their* wind rising. The old Moon was at work. "Why keep it up, old Moon?" I whispered up to her. The lions roared among their rocks, but I could hear plainly the cries of birds both nearby and along the mournful shore.

I looked at the sky. I envy and hate them up there. Cassiopeia can rest!

The vineyards below, the huts and the groves I saw, and the sea around, and the eye of the black ship. I saw, in the moonlight, the tattered bones play on their strings in the willows. "Old, displeasing ones! There are some now more displeasing than you. Your hollow kiss would be sweeter to my mouth than the happy kiss of one wayfarer, when morning comes!"

I swayed, was flung backward by my torment to the floor, and I believed that I lay in disgrace and my blood was green, like the wand that snaps in two. My sight returned to me when I awoke in the pigsty, in the red and black hills of flesh, and it was morning.

They left when the Sun was only a little high.

At the last, the youngest — Elpenor was his name — fell off my roof. He'd forgotten where he had gone to sleep. So drunk the last night, the drunkest of them all so as not to be known any longer as only the youngest, he'd gone to sleep on top of my house seeking air, and when they called him, he stepped right off.

I could see him fall — down through the rosy light with beating fists, as though he'd never left his mother's side till then. He died at once.

They all ran from the table, I followed as far as the door. They stood or they crouched over Elpenor in the yard, low-voiced, consoling each other for him. To have the baby of them all go falling to lie facedown in a stranger's yard made them weep for themselves as he did when they first came.

They lifted the boy, whose neck was broken, and each held him in

his arms. They brushed the leaves from him, and smoothed his red locks, which were still tangled from brief attempts of love-making and from his too-sound sleep.

I spoke from my place in the doorway, "I suggest that when you dig the grave in the earth here, under the riding shadow of your ship, you write on the gravestone, 'Mourn one whose misfortune was to fall from Love's roof before he had climbed to her golden bed.' "

I believed I was speaking the pure idiom of man, and was seeing myself as one of them then, before they should go — a human being desirable beyond human help. But when they heard me, they left Elpenor where he had fallen, unburied there, and fled.

Red-limbed, with linens sparkling now, they ran over the windy path from house to ship, like new butterflies turned loose — erratically, to sea! From the prow itself his shout drove them back and forth. They loaded the greedy ship with my gifts.

I slid out of their path; only vanishing prevents ugly farewells, prevents ingratitude to the gods, too.

I had no need to see them set sail, knowing the way the well-known ship with the blue prow would turn toward Hades; when they asked for directions, I sent them straight on. I had no need to watch them enter the waves, knowing as well as if I'd been ahead of them all the way the far and wide, misty and islanded, bright and indelible and menacing world, under which they all must go. Foreknowledge isn't the same thing as the last word, nevertheless.

My cheek against the stony ground, I could hear the swine, like summer thunder. Old and forgotten, those were with me still, pets now, grumbling without meaning.

I rose to my feet. I was sickened — with child. The island fell steep before me, blotted with sweet myrtles, with high oaks that would have given me my own ship; its rim afire, a ring on the sea. His black ship was out of sight. The little son, oh yes, would follow and slay him.

I waited on a rock and wished for grief. But even that would not come to me. Though I could pull the Moon down if I felt I had good cause, there was still grief, that could not be round or bright or solid or running on its track, where a curse could get at it.

No, like the other thing, it has no heavenly course — a course my Father has often explained to me, along with the golden bowl that contains the watery half of it.

But grief — I could not find its mouth, or bait it. I am sure now grief is a ghost, and always was. Less than ungrateful man.

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS:

A Quiet Night

Eyelids: their petal-on-pond sweet meeting at night.

At once the landscape unlocks, flies apart:
On shaggy wing the crow-dark hemlocks shrug,
Flap off in wind; great woods stream to the stars.
God sees the air fantastic with hunched cows,
Plum freightcars, little spotted dogs. The whirlwind
Zooms it up to a zenith point. There vanished.
Only, beneath bare heaven, a kind of sea heaves.

Then our white torso in dark water awash,
Lost figurehead, limbless, mere driftwood dreaming,
Companioned by tall antlers of wreck, nuzzled
By fish with keys and photographs for scales.

Let the eye flicker — furore contorts the void.
A speck in heaven explodes, funnels out
Assorted infinity: crow-flapping firs
Desperate for earth, wheelbarrow, blown marquee.
Great sailing planks and parasols, fruitstands
Swirl down in a cyclone, sort themselves, assemble.

When the eyes open, limbs lie make-believe;
Eyes see the room just poised, its curtains breathless;
Out windows see a landscape tense in tableau,
The smallest thing in place (look, the child's cart
With a limp doll grinning in it) — or, if not quite,
Inference of nightwind, a rumor of rain.

A Few Unexpected Tropical Fish

Miles where nothing lives but wind
Raging, and no colors play;
All drifting sooty-white
Under sky's sooty-grey.
Only imaginative painters
Could find a colored stroke:
Slate hue in the kinky cedar
Copper in the curl of oak.
Nothing. But:

a twig-entangled
Glint of insulator, keen-
Blue as scudding summer, cool as
Luminous aquarium-green.
And a moment through the snowstorm
Click the well-behaving heels
Of the curious — strolling, staring
Into artificial fields
Under water, cliffed with marble.
Bubblers in the neon fume.
Fishes gay as face-cards
Shuttle in their prism room.

Big scowling Archimedes
Took my mitten palm and shook it.
Arm in arm we strode. The other?
Unexpected Alice took it.

Adam's Ballad

"So sweetly bedded in Being,
So lost in locks of the sun;
So flushed and dazzled by dawn, by
Dark so troubled and spun.

"Bold in the owner's region,
I who have no right here
Have taken Being, his lady,
Slept with his wayward dear.

"Drunk the shy mist, her kisses,
On her wild breasts floated, the sea,
As heaven, bluest eye burning,
Was bending only on me.

"Part of his white love's body
God shall not have again.
He let me in and I took her.
She will stay among men.

"Even God, beholding bright Esse,
Trembles in rage of delight.
What of me, who fast in her forearms
Share the deep of the night?"

Thus as the blood ran warmer
Was Adam's saga begun —
So sweetly bedded in Being,
So lost in locks of the sun.

RALPH ROBIN:

The Improbable Redemption of Donald Grenfell

1

"I certainly like my cheese," said the optometrist from Cleveland. "Yes, sir, I don't think there is anyone who is fonder of cheese than I am. When I'm at home I eat a piece of cheese every blessed meal."

"He sure likes his cheese," said the optometrist's wife from Cleveland. "Why, if I would let him, he would practically live on cheese."

Donald closed his eyes and pressed his eyeballs with long forefingers: he did it to annoy his wife Gloria, who called it "closing his eyes at people." *How proud he is, she is, his being a prominent cheese-lover; I wonder what the Greek combining form for cheese is. Dr. Whatever-His-Name-Is, prominent optometrist and somethingophile from Cleveland, late yesterday contributed to the welfare of humankind by thrice eating cheese. It's curious the pride they have in their own uninteresting habits.* He opened his eyes and looked at the optometrist's small black shoes, gleaming side by side in irritating symmetry. "Do you like all types of cheese or only certain special kinds?" Donald asked politely.

"Oh, I don't eat any kind of cheese," the optometrist explained. "I don't like it too mild, and I don't like it too sharp. It has to be just right."

"The doctor is very fussy about his cheese," said the optometrist's wife.

"Do you like Roquefort?" Donald's voice was kind; in the courts he had fancied a talent for the tender question. Gloria rose from a wicker reclining chair, pulled her skirt from the trapping rump. There was a careful expression on her face, familiar to Donald, and she said, "I think we should excuse ourselves. We were on the beach most of the day, and I for one am ready for bed."

"So early?" said the optometrist's wife.

Gloria's smile, happy and disgusted at the same time, warns me. It has become a learned profession. The home-maker goes to the realtor to see about the copulating area. Says the other goodwife, the symposium on the cheese-eating habits of Cleveland optometrists must

not end so abruptly. "You run along, dear," Donald said in his kind voice. "I'll stay and chat for a while."

Gloria threw her cigarette in the direction of the ocean and went inside. Donald, following the bright trajectory to a clean rock, winced.

"The question was, sir, do you like Roquefort?"

"That's French blue cheese, isn't it? No, I don't like it. I don't like these foreign cheeses."

"My husband says, you can't beat a good American cheese."

Donald's graceful eyebrows dipped as he weighed these statements. "You mean a good American cheese that isn't too mild and isn't too sharp?"

"That's it exactly," said the optometrist. "That's exactly the kind of cheese I like."

"I know one foreign cheese you might like," Donald said thoughtfully. "It's another French cheese."

"I don't know." The optometrist sounded doubtful. "What is it?"

"It's called merde. M . . . E . . . R . . . D . . . E." At first only the optometrist's black shoes moved, sliding from the rail and hitting the floor with amusing symmetry. The optometrist flushed. "Ex-cuse me. Well. I must say," he said. He pushed from his chair and summoned his woman, "Dear."

"Good-night," said the optometrist's wife from Cleveland. "Thank you. We'll try some merde."

"Shut up," her husband said. Donald never turned around; their peevish whispering and the tap-tap of their shoes faded behind him. *One would have thought I asked for the plain steel rims.* He smoked a cigarette; he carefully pinched the end and put the butt on the cast-iron stand. The world was growing dark. The cool air blew quietly. The evening ocean beat the rocks with lustful slaps.

This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air nimbly and sweetly recommends itself unto our gentle senses. But the people, good God, the people. There were perhaps a dozen guests sitting on the porch, and Donald counted five empty chairs between himself and his nearest neighbor. The optometrist from Cleveland was a newcomer.

Except for the people, the place is all right. But what good is it? What did Gloria think she would accomplish by bringing me here? That idiot of a doctor must have suggested it, that silly son of a bitch with his diets and his barbiturates. He probably said, stroking his figurative beard, "My dear, what the young man needs is a change of air." He hasn't learned anything since Galen. All his hocus-pocus

will never have me working again. Where is it going to end?"

The porch-sitters chirped intermittently like sleepy birds, growing indistinct to hearing and sight. By ones and twos they wandered to their celibate or connubial beds in the upper reaches of the old wooden building. Donald stared at the restless water and knew that he was lonely for Gloria lying warm and naked while the cheesecloth curtains swished. The moon had put a white strip on the ocean from the hotel to the horizon. It seemed a measurable road: tangible, traversable, paved with marble. *Paved with good intentions and the sands of life; paved with crushed clichés. I could walk it to where the black water ends and jump. Or ride a black stallion to a beehive castle of golden maidens. Couldn't I, mother? Oh, idiot, idiot. And in the beehive castle I would sweat and be nauseated as in the Regan trial; that was the first time. Somehow it's her fault. Why did I marry her? — tied to her fatting body and her eggnogs. This ocean is too tritely beautiful. I'll go to her and after the meaningless burst, sleep. Riddle me this: in what way is the vulva of my wife better than five grains of phenobarbital?*

2

"Do you want another glass of milk?"

"It was all I could do to gag one down."

She looked toward brown egg shells scraped empty and the yolk-stained spoon. "You did well, though. You ate both your eggs."

"I like my eggs. Yes, sir, nobody likes eggs any better than I. I am a prominent egg-lover."

"You hate eggs. Don't get upset by my asking, but what did you do to the optometrist from Cleveland? I met his wife at the bathroom this morning. She was sweet. She was thinking, 'It's not her fault, poor thing.'"

Donald said, "He's a prominent linguist as well as a prominent cheese-lover. He studied French at an American Legion convention."

"What's the use? What difference does it make what you did to him? You would have done something. I won't apologize. You have taught me not to."

"Don't be so resigned."

Still she likes me better than others of the human species; or perhaps that is what she really wants, wants me in opposition to the others. So the hedge-psychologist at Davino's party prophesied through

a mouthful of shrimp. I should have defended him when he was arrested for practicing medicine without a licence. "I'm going for a walk."

"All right. Be careful not to overdo it."

He looked away from the kind concern; from the wide forehead, peeling slightly for sun, that he had admired white under up-combed hair.

"I won't," he promised.

Behind the desk, the manager with a snakeleather face smiled at Donald and from his rocking chair rose carrying his smile. "Aha, Mr. Grenfell. Going for a walk?" *He squirms upward like a snake, hating me because I mock the guests.*

Donald saw a cigarette butt on the rock and thought he saw it lip-red. In his mind, he took it in long fingers and tore it and scattered it.

The beach was morning clean: washed and picked of the social excreta. He walked shoe-lifting to the empty benches, the first-aid shack; he walked to the stores. The adolescent helpers swept the sidewalks, stopped for an old man in blue trousers and a buttoned sweater who shuffled to his breakfast with early greed. Pretty face, T-shirted paps, little round bottom rode by on a bicycle. In front of the cigar store the truck watchers were.

Anxious for their ration of printed clamor. I wonder what they really wait for. YOUTH RAPES MOTHER OF TWO to stir their juices. Neurotic rabbits they look — hoping for a new catastrophe to roar down on them and wash away their little troubles. No, they are not that complex. They are waiting for the comic strips. I had my heroes and villains and waited for the papers. There was no Superman for the good shoemaker and the poor fish peddler. I lay on the blue bedspread and cried for them. My fingers up and down the cloth's familiar ribs, and I wept for a world beneath the dark wings of Judge Thayer and Governor Fuller. Then Hutchinson's big grey mustache that lifted the lip from his teeth when he talked: Latin or French? His teeth were crooked but very white, and I said, Latin, I am going to study law. I should have spoken to that girl on the bicycle. A golden girl in a beehive castle at the end of a shimmering path.

Beyond the street of the clam sellers it was hot on the asphalt, surprisingly, after the water's closeness and early. He took a handkerchief from his pocket and tied it as a triangle to cover his forehead. Automobiles sneaked from behind curves and grades to come at him

with a rush and derisively to break carbon monoxide as they fled. There was a convertible full of screaming faces, and Donald cursed the faces for hooting at his kerchiefed head. *Regan saw it. He saw the boil forming on my will, stretching it sore. His miser's eyes missed nothing. He had a new lawyer before I was out of bed. I can't blame him. Eggnogs and pity and barbiturates to make the cheese more binding. For the optometrist from Cleveland.*

The lane that started at the No Trespassing sign was quiet among trees; the air was cool again. It was a path to the world for station wagons, but none moved. Gleaming with varnish, they watched him from driveways and sniffed at him from distant carports. Donald hoped that a cottager would give the alarm and bring out the gentry in arms. A baldhead in linen might: he was examining his iron gate with purseproud care. When Donald caught his eye, he lowered his bald head and muttered something. Donald stared at him till he had to look up; then the man smiled nervously and said, "Nice morning."

What are they but lawyers who kept getting more and fatter suits? —insurance men who kept writing more and fatter policies? —surgeons who kept cutting more and fatter abdomens? I would enjoy a big summer house with my own beach in front of me and the woods behind me and No Trespassing signs. And I would have had it too —until the Regan trial. I have a noble wife and a dignified physician. The road wandered inland, losing its houses, losing its trees. A naked penitent, it returned to the shore through rocky scrub. It found an amphitheater of blue pebbles, sloping under the sun to the forward wash.

He had to think of the slipping walls. Fast walking was easiest; he almost ran along the semicircle breathing quickly and once laughed. He stopped at a place where the pebbles were trapped and watched the ocean lick the earth. At the edge of the pit, rocks rose: with peaks and valleys, model for a mountain range. Donald sat on the pebbles and ran his hand from long narrow eyebrows to the top of his head. He threw smooth stones, snapping them overhand with the elegance of a solitary boy.

At an instant he realized content and lost it.

He had in his hands a pebble colored and shaped and feeling like a robin's egg. He turned it in his fingers, turned it, and summoned the ghosts and they came. His mother, eternal widow, with affectionate whine. The good shoemaker and the poor fish peddler. The boy had waked from dreams that he had watched them die, sometimes that he had thrown the monstrous switch. The poet at Virginia

Beach with her poems of freedom, a partisan of the angels. The aunts and uncles who in Donald's dreams still hunted him with merry cries. The hedge-psychologist at Davino's party. The ghost of ghosts, that cacodemon, the ghost of Donald in the Regan trial.

The vomit burst around the seven-dollar handkerchief, a gift from Gloria. Some fell on my shoes and separated from an unchewed blueberry. Not to be exorcised. I was almost happy without the ghosts that come creeping like cats. I will feed them no more cream today. Pushing through the gravel he rounded the amphitheater; he let himself slide to the threshold of the rocks.

Donald jumped to a waste-high flat, then to a narrow shelf three feet higher. He climbed carelessly, enjoying the grip of his rubber-soled shoes on higher and higher footings. He grew drunk with the bending of joints, the contraction of muscles. Above cliffs he courted the macrocosmic dangers of his microcosmic mountains. He rejoiced that a slip could throw him on knife edges: red flesh and grey wool and yellow rayon and white bone.

He rested on a level rock, large as a double bed. He could not see pine tree nor house nor human being. A filamentous insect, blown past Donald's eyes, divided life with him. Donald found his pulse automatically, but he forgot to notice whether it was fast. He took off his clothes and lay in the sun.

The rock was striated like petrified wood, and Donald stroked the surface with fingertips. *Once I knew names — granite? I must go sometime to the library in the village and find a book on the local geology. In the beehive castle the golden maidens are tended by buzzing servitors and guarded by trolls. The tamed troll will take my cloak and conduct me through waxen corridors, rich-smelling, to hexagonal chambers where they lie fanned by wings. Drones, elegant and insolent, will serve the honeycakes . . . baklava in fairyland. The waiter said of Metaxas, the minority can rule for a time but the majority will overthrow the minority.* He drowsed, turning in half-sleep to equate the sun-caressing of buttocks and belly.

Headache awoke him on the sweated rock. He sat up and wiped his face with his sportshirt. He looked at the cold water. Sharp rocks pointed, but at one place the ocean gurgled in and out of a pool between smooth sides. He put on only his shoes and climbed down to the water's edge carrying his clothes.

Donald pulled the tied shoes from his feet and tested the pool. His toes found soft bedded seaweed. He slipped in and let the water

wash to his neck. He felt the water coldly cleanse his armpits, his genitals. Perhaps he shouted.

Donald was dressing when the man dropped from a ledge as a sparrow hops. He was old, and the only color of his suit was oldness. His shirt was blue, buttoned at the neck. He was of the small old and rightly wore a dirty cap. *From what Fabian slum have you come to life, my friend? You moved many weights with crooked fingers and sat on curbs. Through the ocean odors I sniff your rancid skin.* The old man watched as if he had never seen the dance of putting-on of trousers.

"I want to rent you my daughter," he said.

"I have never seen your daughter. I don't go around renting girls in pokes, you know." *He is a more interesting conversationalist than the optometrist from Cleveland. Pins in frogs to know there is life in a dead world. But he must value his premises. I used to value mine.*

The stranger lifted the torn lining of his coat pocket with rubbed-dark fingers and freed a pipe and a can of Union Leader; he lit with spitting. Donald finished dressing.

"You look a lot better with your clothes on. My daughter might find those ribs mighty uncomfortable."

"You're not trying to back out now? Do I get a look at your daughter?"

"Sure as shooting."

Donald dully climbed, happy for easy ways around cliffs he had challenged. The rocks broke at last to small islands on a brambly slope. The old man stepped from rock to rock, and Donald followed, putting foot where foot lifted. Choosing the same stones had the importance of missing no sycamore on the way to school when the bark peeled.

"Say, pal, does your daughter have a nice pair of knockers?"

His guide turned and took out the pipe to grin with brown teeth.

"Nicest pair of knockers in the county, son. But don't talk that way around her. She's refined and educated."

This is a precarious social situation. I must remember not to mention knockers in the presence of this refined and educated girl while I rent her from her father. It is unfortunate that I am not accompanied by my refined and educated wife.

A white-shingled house among white-shingled houses looked newly built. But the furniture was old. A dark round table seemed almost to fill the room they entered. A girl sat at the table rubbing her eyes.

She looked up, solemnly saw Donald.

"Kafka," she said.

"Sartre," Donald said.

"Has my father offered to rent me?"

Donald blushed. "I didn't take him seriously, of course."

"I assure you he was quite serious."

"You bet your sweet life," said her father. He went to the kitchen and brought three bottles of beer and three glasses.

Flashing light from a metal device on his forehead, the doctor dressed in grey woolen garment of intricate weave had put a tabu upon fermented fruits and grains. Donald accepted a bottle of beer. It was good, much better than he remembered beer to taste. Molecules of ethyl alcohol passed through semipermeable membranes into his veins. He looked at the girl's face, carefully tanned, almost golden: her arms, too, below the white shimmer. *Dupont de Nemours, an itinerant weaver, bows to the maidens. Trolls with beer mugs. She is sun-loved, ocean-loved. The universe is hermaphrodite, loving me, loving her.*

Around the table with beer they settled the details. The arrangement was quite simple. Donald was to pay one dollar for each year he had lived. For this sum and other valuable considerations he was to be permitted one day with the girl in the big maple bed. The money was payable in silver dollars.

3

The radio in the next room played.

Gloria sat with propped bare feet.

A light unlit hung from the ceiling by a gilded chain.

The radio in the next room was singing sweetly of love.

Gloria was working a crossword puzzle in the *Nation*.

The light fixture, a single socket with a glass shield, oscillated narrowly. *Many millenia have worked to this instant. Berries and grubs were nutritious. Duties were pleasures, eating and coupling. But the restless species bred god-givers, law-givers. Bred engineers. Wrapped life in cellophane. Wrapped life in rubber. Filled the shop windows. Set the prices high. Indicted burglars.*

Donald unscrewed the bulb and dropped it on the tangled bedding. He twisted the threaded plug of an extension cord into the

socket. He snapped the switch of an electric shaver; the radio in the next room screamed and died. Leaning on the lowboy, he ran the warm metal up and down his cheek.

The image of Gloria childlike chewed her pencil. Her wrapper was lose, and the magazine rested on heavy thighs. Gloria's mirrored face was not very fat. *There is no animal burying of the eyes. She squints intelligently, even charmingly.* "Having trouble?" he asked, not turning.

"All I need is a dictionary."

"All in the world?"

"All."

Donald pressed the vibrating teeth against the stiff hairs of his lip. "Did I ever tell you how I came to study law?"

"Yes."

The hedge-psychologist at Davino's party prophesied with the red sauce running down his chin that Gloria would destroy me. But he was a celebrant of the black mass. He held that sexual desire was a sublimation of idealism and greed. After many drinks he sat cross-legged on a scatter rug blaspheming Freud.

Donald turned off the shaver, replaced the light bulb, wound the extension cord.

The light fixture oscillated narrowly.

Gloria printed eight letters.

The radio in the next room sang again.

"Our love is an A-bomb, but it's an okay bomb, a bomb that will blow us to, show us to bliss," the radio sang.

"There's an article in this *Nation,*" said Gloria, "about a high school teacher in St. Louis who was fired for teaching non-Euclidean geometry. The Sons of the American Revolution complained."

"What could I do for him?"

"That's not the question, Donald — it never was. The question is, what could he do for you?"

"Regan could have done more."

"Did he?"

"It was not his fault. It was a sickness of body — or will. The old miser and I were putting the screws to Leapler Company. There was no moral issue involved."

"None."

Children shrieked in the outdoor shower. Donald leaned out the window. Two little girls left the shower and sat on a patch of very

green grass. They pointed to each other's navels and giggled wildly. Below the children and the grass, the day ocean squeezed its heavy breasts, squirted the rocks with white milk spray.

Dave was not anxious for me to meet his father. He was not proud of his father, disbarred during the World War and always writing letters to the newspapers. I pestered Dave till one day he said, all right, come over tonight. It surprised me a little that I was a head taller than Mr. Lebo. He gave me a glass of sweet wine, and we played a game of chess while Dave watched. Mr. Lebo won. He said that Tolstoy was the world's greatest novelist. Mrs. Lebo came downstairs and went around locking windows, and I knew that it was time to leave. Mr. Lebo was a partisan of the angels.

Turning to Gloria, Donald asked, "Why did you marry me?"

"I think," she said, "to test the hypothesis of a hedge-psychologist and because I loved you."

"I'm going out. I'll have breakfast somewhere."

"Try and eat two eggs and drink a glass of milk."

The lobby smelled of close coffee; the mouth in the snakeskin face breathed clove and toast and grinned, tempting fists. "The man with the papers brought it. Thirty-three." The manager handed Donald a small package tied with black-and-white string. "It's a present, isn't it?" He scratched a vein on the side of his nose.

Make a fist, Donald. Make a fist and hit him. Immolate a nose for Uncle Steve. I would have hit the grinning face, but never for Blue Legs and Tobacco Stink. You're making a sissy out of him, Martha. What is Snakeface grinning at? Around here, no doubt, renting refined and educated girls is a tourist attraction like the old lighthouse. They must have been doing it for generations. "Did you call a taxi?"

"Nathan's out there — my cousin."

Nathan waited at the wheel of an old Plymouth. Nathan, in a buttoned sweater, was old too. Donald thought suddenly that he was the girl's father. He looked at him closely. Nathan's appearance seemed to change, and Donald knew that he had been mistaken.

"Get in," the driver said. He pressed the starter; the motor whirred inconclusively, fired at last. "It's that darned vegetarian I have working for me in the garage," he grumbled, tugging the gearshift. "He switches sparkplugs on me."

"Why don't you fire him?"

"I can't fire him. He's my cousin."

They passed the cigar store.

"I didn't tell you where to go," Donald said. "Forty-eight Wilkens Road."

"I know. I knew the other morning when you saw my cousin on the bicycle."

"The hotel manager? The vegetarian?"

"No. I have many relatives in this county. The young woman you are renting. I was going to breakfast at the time."

What is he talking about? I don't remember him. Faces bob, painted balloons. Pretty faces, ugly faces, young faces, old faces. I can classify them, but I can't identify them. How are you today, Mr. Grenfell? Fine, thank you, who the hell are you? "You look like her father; I thought at first you were her father."

Donald watched the driver's ears turn red. They were long ears, with the lobes attached to his jaws. They were fringed with hair, which was very white on the flushing ears.

"What do you take me for?" Nathan growled. "I'm related to her through her mother's side of the family."

He crouched over the wheel and drove jerkily, muttering with the persistent anger of the old. "I will be happy when I'm shut of you. I have heard all about you. Fooling the optometrist's wife from Cleveland with the French word for manure. Pretending you wanted fifty thousand dollars' worth of insurance from Mr. Snowburger. Accusing that clean-minded mortician of putting his hand on your wife. He would have hit you if you weren't a sick man, and it would have served you right. I don't know why my cousin puts up with you in his hotel. I've told him time and again that you're a born trouble-maker. If it wasn't for the contract, I would stop the car right now, and out you would go.

"Darn fool," said Nathan in final judgment.

Donald watched the back of his head, hating it; hating especially the hair on the long ears; loathing above all one particular hair that projected stiffly at least an inch from the left lobe. He thought that if he had a long sharp knife he would cut off first that hair, then the ears, and then the head.

The car suddenly stopped, throwing Donald forward; backed quickly.

A smiling priest gripped the door handle.

"Good morning, Nathan," he said through the open window. "Good morning, sir. I wonder if I could ask a favor. I have had

trouble with my car, and I have an important call to make at Mrs. Crow's. If this gentleman does not mind, I should appreciate your taking me by."

"Sure," Nathan said. "Hop in, reverend."

"Wait a minute. Is it out of our way? It seems to me you've been taking all morning as it is."

Nathan's lips shook. "That darned contract. To tell the truth, Grenfell, it is a bit out of the way, but I'm sure you wouldn't mind helping out the reverend."

Donald said, "We don't have time. Let's go. I am sorry, father."

The priest said, "I am sorry," and took his hand from the latch. He pointed a heavy, red-freckled finger. "I am not unaware of the contents of your package. Good day, sir. Good day, Nathan."

Now Nathan drove faster. They rode out of the sunshine, penetrated a grey world. The windshield slapped an occasional drop of water out of the air like a fat fly. Little streams of water began to run down the glass, and Nathan started the windshield wipers. *When Jesus told the rich man to sell everything and give the money to the poor, he was not worrying about the poor. He was thinking of the rich man's chances of heaven. Gloria is right of course. The question is what the poor bobbing balloons can do for me.* The windshield wipers were out of phase. The left blade swept three times while the right blade swept twice. Donald found that the discordance was making his head ache, and he closed his eyes.

Not to think. Rain. Motion. The beginning of tumescence.

"Oh, shoot," said Nathan.

"What's the matter now?"

Nathan steered to the side of the road. A white car passed, parked. A trooper in scarlet and pale blue, leathered and shining, came quickly through the rain. Nathan opened the door; the trooper quickly sat.

"I'm surprised at you, Nathan," he said. "I couldn't believe my eyes when I clocked you at sixty-five. Never seen you hit more than forty before. And a good thing, too," he added.

Nathan, in the splendor of the policeman, seemed to have grown dingier and older and weaker. He stared at his dark knuckles on the wheel, silent.

The policeman thrust a breeched leg from the car, admired it. "I won't give you a ticket this time, Nathan, but watch your step hereafter."

He turned to Donald and smiled. "Another thing," he said. "A word to the wise, you know. The chief has got his eye on this contract work and is thinking of busting it up for good."

He stepped from the automobile, stood for a moment to sneer at rain, and strode to the white car.

Nathan's windshield wipers began to sweep at cross-purposes; grunting Nathan pulled at the gearshift. Rain washed; the dark road blackened slowly, slowly for a long time . . .

Donald woke to old rain, to a turning byway paved with crushed stone. "Where are we now?" he asked irritably.

"Near," said Nathan.

The steering wheel struggled in his hands like an animal or a child. In the rain a man wearing a leather jacket moved his arm absolutely. Nathan stopped the car.

"You knew this," Donald said. He opened the window. "What do you want?" he asked.

The man was very young. "You can't go through here," he said with casual conviction. "Go back."

"Why, for God's sake?"

"I thought it was generally known we test physical laws in this area. The public is admitted only on special days designated by the senior scientist." He spoke calmly.

"Your physical laws do not concern me," Donald said. "We're going through."

The young man wiped water from his face with the palm of his hand. He smiled. "Have it your way. But you won't come back. That's the senior scientist's rule."

He walked among wet leaves and was gone.

"Start the car," Donald said.

"Want me to turn around?"

"No."

Nathan hunched his thin, sweatered shoulders. "It's all right with me. I'll get back — I always have. But you won't. There's not a thing in the contract that makes me responsible."

Donald said, "Take me to forty-eight Wilkens Road and go where you please."

"Darn fool," Nathan said and drove on.

The rain dwindled. When they reached the house, the sun was shining. Here things were sun-baked. The rain had not been.

Donald confusedly stood, found his wallet. But Nathan pulled

the door shut with a sulky twitch.

"No charge."

The girl's father watched from his balanced rocking chair. His hands were clasped behind his head. Today he wore a white shirt with a starched collar and a black tie. On the floor beside him were a bottle of whiskey and a water glass. "Don't run off, Nathan," he called. "Come up and wet your whistle."

"Obliged. Not today," Nathan yelled. He hurried away the whimpering car.

Donald walked slowly to the porch, carrying his package: brown-papered, tied with black-and-white string. Walked slowly up three unfamiliar steps, white-painted under the sun with a crack sun-opened on the second step. The other shingled houses seemed farther away than he remembered. Far away across sandy fields. Under the old man's arms sweat had dried stiff and yellow like semen. It was strange that, not related, he looked so much like Nathan. He had the same long ear lobes growing from the jaws.

"Here. The money."

The old man took the package and put it beside the whiskey bottle. "Wet your whistle?"

Donald answered, "Don't mind if I do." He borrowed the old man's glass and poured an inch of whiskey and drank. The sun shone with desert brightness: fired the stained glass in his hand; scorched the red leaves in a flower pot; reflected from the old man's black tie, silken stuff.

She came from the door and took his hand. The sun caught a gold band on her bare arm; her arms were gold too, her face, her throat. She watched him with grey eyes.

"I brought the money," he said.

She nodded with sweet solemnity. "And the other valuable considerations?"

"Later, perhaps. I must classify them according to size and color and brilliance."

"Never mind." She led him into the house, around the dark table, to the bedroom. She pulled green shades; there were little holes in them, and pieces of light spattered the afghan on the old maple bed.

Her father's voice came through the windows and door, a cracking shout. "The liquor's taking hold," she said. "He always gets drunk on August twenty-third."

Donald, sitting on the bed, took off his shoes and socks. Now he could make out the old man's words.

". . . to scorning men. I might have died, unmarked, unknown, a failure. Now we are not a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life can we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding of man, as now we do by an accident. Our words — our lives — our pains — nothing! The taking of our lives — lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fish peddler — all! That last moment belongs to us — that agony is our triumph!"

ROBERT CREELEY:

Gangster

he said, turning, unconscious of
emphasis, why — goddamn it — I
was almost a gangster! Could
shoot straight. That's it. So
at morning, coming alone and
walking five miles, he could see
the horns and waited. Looking.
Until it was all there. He fired.

Simple? How simple? To say what's
what takes how much? Three cans
in a row, from the hip yet. No
joke. But to worry, to think
of it that way (the gangster) —
to see yourself like others
see you, Jesus, what pride!

Quieter, a wife and two children,
he'll wait for a reckoning.

ARTHUR GREGOR:

Poem in IV Parts

It is a world of
rocks and water

It is a world of
water seething
and water coming
to break the rocks
away
the water has come
to form the rocks
that in other places
the water had come
to break away
the water has come
to form the rocks
and the water has come
to break the rocks
away
coming and going
seething and calming
coming and clashing
foam upon the rock

It is a world with
golden chairs in
theater boxes
with ragged towers and
a drawbridge and
a white horse that leaves
the drawbridge

there the tower rises
there it falls

and there
on the fields beneath
the towers
a scattered waste of
roses,
broken arms,
embroidered emblems,
gloves of metal
shielding fingers to the nail

It is a world of
water seething of
water calming and
women coming
to take their places
on golden chairs
or on stools
with no backs
to support the sitter

they come with trowels
each bearing a handful of ashes

after all is gone
and all that was
was not as should have been
was only the unfolder,
the performer of all
that could have been

— their feel of roses
of male fingers gripped
about their arm and
whispers in their ear —

after all is gone
and the meditative dancers come
and the horses and the legions
that move on

there the tower rises
there it falls

It is a world of
rocks and water

and water seething
and women sitting
and ashes drifting
ashes drifting toward
the water
coming
calming
clashing
foam upon the rock

MARTIN SCHOLTEN:

Though Time Shall Interrupt Again

As if the film had suddenly
stopped on an image of the
suicide in mid-air or the cobra's
fang arrested a mere
fraction of an inch from its in-
tended victim—
and you
adrift on seething rapids heading
helpless towards the fate—
sheer falls
Lights! Lights!
a temporary rescue . . .

(though time shall interrupt again
with dark mind-echoing roar of waters
and flicker-fall of flesh resuming
the suspended drama)

JAMES BLISH:

Song as Song

There is no simple lie; deceit is mirrors,
Liars images of lies and murderees for truth.
Cats? No, cats are not live dolls
Their truths are brutal, but not errors,
Purr is no lie, claw is for honest pleasure
Home is where the place is, not fed leisure.

Love of place and love of sound,
Song and hand together.
Birds have song, and so has wine
Cats have phosphorescent shine
Of fur and orbit, love has wound
All these to weather.

God purrs lightning, he loves truth in flashes,
Thunder is for lies and never stops.
Peace? God loves peace, as cats love crows
As mock for violence and passion,
Loves it like truth, peace and the lampblack wing
Death and the figure nine, the ringtailed starveling.

Love of place and love of sound
No cat in the mirror.
Death O cat behind the shin-
ing odorless immortal wine-
clawed-open fur-rimmed wound
True love's own error

Love of place and love of sound,
Song and hand together.
God is the figure nine,
Death is the weather.

REGINALD L. COOK:

Frost as a Parablist

Robert Frost's "pleasure of ulteriority"[1] — of saying one thing and meaning another — is immense. It is in the texture of the two New England Biblicals, *A Masque of Reason* and *A Masque of Mercy,* and, among other poems, in "The Grindstone," "The Lockless Door," "The Demiurge's Laugh," "The Bear," "Directive," "The Egg and the Machine," and "For Once, Then, Something." The pleasure for the reader is, in effect, that of seeing implications. Frost will, however, counsel while reading from his poems: "Just take the surface of it as I do other people's poetry."[2] He will warn: "Poems can be pressed too hard for meaning."[3] He will suggest: "All that I ask is that you apply what you bring to the reading of the poems."[4] In *A Further Range,* obviously with tongue in cheek, he distinguishes between the poems to be taken "singly," and those to be taken "doubly." He knows only too well there are readers who hover

> . . . for a moment near discovery,
> Figurative enough to see the symbol,
> But lacking faith in anything to mean
> The same at different times to different people.

Once Frost said: "I have written poetry ever since I was fifteen years old, and there come to be quite a number of people who know how to take me in my wry way, in my twisted way, with the words cocked a little like a cocked hat, like a cocked feather. That is poetry. The large strain of poetry is a little shifted from the straight-out, a little curved from the straight. Within the large thing itself are the lesser personal twists. One belongs to me; one belongs to someone else." He illustrated his point by quoting Emily Dickinson's figure, "The lightning skipped like mice." "Can you imagine some people taking that?" he inquired. "Can't you imagine some people not accepting that kind of play at all?" Again he illustrated, and this time

---

[1] *The Poems of Robert Frost* (New York: Modern Library, 1946), p. xvi.
[2] Lecture at Santa Fe, New Mexico, August 5, 1935.
[3] Reading at Bread Loaf School of English, Bread Loaf, Vermont, August 6, 1945.
[4] At Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, August 18, 1945.

from Browning: "And startled little waves that rise in fiery ringlets from their sleep." He added, "It is a very out-of-the-way sort of speech, isn't it?"[5]

Many lines in Frost's *Complete Poems* illustrate a personal twist in expression. The twist originates when he detects a relationship between apparently dissimilar things and associates them in metaphor. For example, in "Unharvested" he writes about an apple tree which "had eased itself of its summer load,/ And of all but its trivial foliage free,/ Now breathed as light as a lady's fan." But the kind of poetic metaphor Frost also likes is less linguistic and more philosophical. What he likes to do is commit, as he says, "honest duplicity," by saying one thing and meaning another.[6] It is interesting to see how he uses metaphor in this more philosophic way in the parable-like poems.

Although he comes late in expounding the theory by which his poetry has long been written, nevertheless, in private talk and public address he urges education by metaphor as the responsibility of the poet in any age. The metaphorist is akin to the parablist since a parable is a story told in metaphor, like the parables that recall the metaphors embodying Christ's stories — the mustard seed, the talents, the stony and the good ground, the Great Supper, the vineyard. Frost has a natural story-telling ability, an impulse toward the dramatic, a strong tendency toward analogizing. In "Brown's Descent" or "Paul's Wife," he narrates with humor and whimsey. "Home Burial" and "The Death of the Hired Man" are told dramatically, as in a play. But, in "The White-tailed Hornet," an analogizing tendency is linked with story-telling ability and becomes a parable. The parable co-ordinates the analogy and the story in an extended metaphor. Frost's personal story-telling gift, which combines with an ability to perceive and join hidden relationship in metaphor, is a particular contribution to American literature.

Emerson says there is "poetry which, without aiming to be allegorical, is so. Which, sticking close to its subject, and that perhaps trivial, can yet be applied to the life of man and the government of God and be found to hold." In testing Frost's poetry by this dictum the two words allegorical and trivial are open to challenge. Some of his poems can be called poetic parables — "The Grindstone," for example — but to describe them as allegory, like *The Faerie Queene,* would be false. The parable embodies its interpretation in the narrative; the

[5] Lecture at Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vt., May 27, 1936.
[6] Class talk on Poetry, Bread Loaf School of English, Summer, 1928.

allegory emphasizes ideas as abstractions. Nor do Frost's parables deal with trivial subjects, although their subject-matter is common in experience.

From the start, as a percipient sensibilitist, he has sought the essential quality in "facts common in experience,"[7] both natural and human. He has kept steadily to the self-assigned task of "Setting the thing that is supreme,"[8] whether an abandoned woodpile in a woodland stand, swinging birches as a boy, or glimpsing a whiteness in water-depths while kneeling at a well-curb. An accurate description of his method is Goethe's statement: "If a man grasps the particular vividly, he also grasps the general, without being aware of it at the time; or he may make the discovery long afterwards." Frost does not seek the particular as an illustration of the general. He seeks the particular and in releasing it to significance suggests the universal which is in the particular. This is what some of his parables succeed in doing, and one reason for their success is that he neither presses too hard for ulterior meaning nor forces the particular to render the general.

His method of composition generates interest in his craftsmanship. His poetic commitment begins in an incalculable start and he is not at first aware exactly what the connotation will be as he writes the poem. His commitment is not fulfilled with the flourish of a contrived end, as in O. Henry. "If it is thought out first and expressed last, I dismiss it," he says of other writings.[9] The poem is strongest when it closes firmly at the point where hint broadens into suggestion of ulteriority. The poet starts with a particular mood. The mood picks up its impregnating idea, and the poet, avoiding any deflection, tries to carry through idea, image and sound to a "triumphal intention."[10] Form and content are such variable units in the act of creation that only under optimum conditions is there an intense fusion of fire and form.

II

In *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* Cleanth Brooks is well aware of Frost's inclination to parable, although he discusses it in different

---

[7] Quoted in Gorham B. Munson's *Robert Frost* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1927) p. 48.

[8] *Complete Poems* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1949) p. 29.

[9] Charles Eliot Norton Lecture, given by Frost at Harvard University, March 25, 1936.

[10] Talk with Frost at South Shaftsbury, Vt., June 2, 1933. What he likes to be able to say of the poem is: "Here is a poem that is a triumphal intention, that bore right through and dismissed itself."

terms. After noting how the elements used by Frost in the poem are usually anecdote, incident, character sketch, Brooks remarks that "as poet, he employs them for purposes of indirection."[11] Discussing "The Woodpile," Brooks shows that the poem rambles, taking its form from the seeming directionlessness of the walker. The walker comes upon a woodpile, long abandoned by some woodchopper, apparently "To warm the frozen swamp as best it could/ With the slow smokeless burning of decay." The woodchopper has turned to other tasks. The walker may surmise why, but comparatively more important is the fact that "nature has," as Brooks points out, "picked up the abandoned task and is completing it. Nothing is lost." The poem is, in effect, a parable of the absorptive aspect of nature — the integrative force of organic nature at work.

"After Apple-Picking" is similar to "The Woodpile" in "metaphorical extension." The apple-picker has completed an appointed seasonal task. His ladder is still in the tree and empty barrels stand near-by. Perhaps a few apples remain on the boughs. But the picker is finished with his task; he has gathered the crop. The suggestion is quiet and unforced, but nevertheless apparent. The poem opens, perhaps symbolically, with the ladder pointing toward heaven; it closes with the overpowering but not oppressive sleep that settles upon the picker. The sleep might be like the woodchuck's hibernative sleep, or just a human sleep, where tomorrow brings other tasks. But something has been done, and sleep represents either completion of responsibilities or interruption of activity, like the sleep we call death. At least the ladder, pointing in a significant direction, is still "sticking through a tree/ Toward heaven still." This parable is in effect one of accomplishment, told with casual simplicity. The analogy is suggested discreetly; it is not imposed upon the poem but remains implicit in the context, as it always does in Frost's effective poems.

It is never Frost's purpose to insist; never his method to force. If there is any secret in his power (as a poet), it must consist in the fact that what he has written has little to do with reactions to other men's lives and thoughts — "he doesn't operate from books," as one of the poet's friends reminds us — and a lot to do with his own inner struggles. It has been said of Picasso that only once — in the painting "Guernica," where he attacked the Nazi bombing of a Spanish town

[11] Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939) chapter 6, pp. 110-116.

— did the painter feel deeply about what he had painted. Whether this is true or false is a matter for the art critics and historians to settle. The point is applicable. Robert Frost has felt deeply but without demonstration. The parable-like poems compound inner tensions in which intensity is reduced, not muted. The voice tones are purposely low-pitched. They must be listened for stilly, like the cricket's throb from the grasses in late autumn. When the inobvious sound is once heard it is as intense as the belling of a hound on a live trail. Frost has disciplined his art to release his feelings, simply and genuinely. "A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so utter it," said Emerson in *Nature,* "depends on the simplicity of his character, that is, upon his love of truth and his desire to communicate it without loss." This is what the reader is aware of in parable-like poems. Being genuinely moved, the poet moves us.

Frost shows no tendency to skid off solid earth into thin air. It is chiefly man's ways on earth that concern him. If earth's the right place for love, as he contends, then it is the right place for other things, and he knows of no place where things are likely to go better this side of Utopia. Of course, this does not mean that Frost hasn't a feeling for ideal aims implicit in man's desiring. Earth-fast as his parables are, now and again the poet takes an oblique glance at the starscape. "We may choose something like a star," he says, "To stay our minds on and be staid."[12]

Most of Frost's parables are either dramatic lyrics like "The Lockless Door," or expository bucolics like "The Grindstone." The former is a parable of self-escape. It dramatizes the mysterious but definite force in human experience — the knock at the door — that scares some men into escaping from the indulgent solitude of self-inclosure. The "knock" compels them to pursue their destiny in the outer world where, although they may still "hide" their essential self and alter with age, they are in a better position to measure their quality with other men and circumstances.

In form "The Grindstone" is very different from the neatly metrical lyric. It is a deceptively rambling blank verse narrative, the germ of which is an experience evoked by the sight of a grindstone standing under an apple tree. The poem breaks naturally into three parts. In the first part, the poet visually identifies the inanimate, neglected, place-bound grindstone with a boyhood experience, when, on a summer

[12] *Complete Poems* (1949), p. 575.

day, he had to turn it unconscionably long. The second part recounts the tension that existed between the boy, whose task it was to keep the oblate spheroid stone turning, and the old bespectacled gaffer, who ground a scythe blade with the assiduity of a disinterested perfectionist. The third part resolves the tension by releasing the incident to significance. For, in the boy's concern that too much grinding might over-do the job, the poet implies the Aristotelian mean — *meden agan* — in all things, rural or otherwise, whether sharpening a scythe, painting a picture or making a point. The parable implies the humanistic doctrine of avoiding extremes — a parable, in short, of judgment and the recognition of limits.

Frost's wit, slow-breaking like a tricky curve ball, inobvious and idiosyncratic, pervades this rural parable compounded of actual experience, conversational blank verse, natural story-telling, and philosophical individualism. "I was for leaving something to the whetter" takes on meaning in the New England individualistic tradition out of which these poems come. The whetter can be depended upon to fulfill his responsibilities no less than the scythe-sharpener. It is not Frost's words only that have the savour of locality; it is also his point-of-view. But, as the percipient Goethe knew, he who grasps the particular vividly, also grasps the general and he may be unaware of it. The vivid particular situation saves Frost from the "danger of a turn too much."

In "The White-tailed Hornet" the materials for a parable are similar in quality to those in "The Grindstone," but instead of an empirical parable we have a homily on skepticism, or what Frost subtitles "The Revision of Theories." First, he describes the hornet's shelter, manoeuvrability and attacking power as commonly experienced. Next, he shows the hornet in action: less aggressive and woefully weaker in instinctive identification of its foes than we had supposed possible. The white-tailed hornet, witlessly swooping, pouncing, and striking nailheads and huckleberries to no avail and trying vainly for a fly, invites derision. Finally, the poet squares off without any attempt to embody his point, as he did in "The Grindstone," and queries openly: "Won't this whole instinct matter bear revision?" Explicitly he tells us that befuddlement comes from making downward rather than upward comparisons. Man has ascribed too much infallibility to the animals and insects. The result of close investigation proves inquiring people to be wrong, and consequently their disillusionment is more intense.

As fine a parable as Frost has ever written is "Birches." It is a parable of knowing and doing; of experience and education by life. The poet recalls the boyhood passion of swinging birches when the swinger learned about "not launching out too soon," and he acquired the necessary poise — "To the top branches, climbing carefully." At the top of the heaven-ward climb, he launched out, swung down, and so touched earth again. "That would be good both going and coming back" since experience consists in the *total* effort: the aspiring, the release, and the return to the substantial earth. Life's a two-way experience, Frost is saying, the coordination of the ideal and the actual. "Our strength is transitional, alternating; or, shall I say, a thread of two strands," says Emerson, and Frost surely would agree. Frost splices two strands — the actual and the ideal — in "Birches," where the vividly grasped particular experience releases the general to significance.

III

These parables suggest that Frost, like Gautier, the Parnassian, is "a man for whom the exterior world exists." He is not, like Rimbaud, at the other extreme, one who explains "magical sophisms (carriages on the highways of the sky, mosques in the places of mills, salons on the bottom of lakes) with the hallucinations of words." Conceiving of reality as existing in neither the world inside man per se, nor in the exterior world impersonally observed, he creates his poetry from the interaction of the two worlds, joining them to evoke the mood or emotion or idea in which the poem's meaning inheres.

One of the impressive things about Frost's judgment is the fact that he never makes the mistake of the extreme Symbolists who turned for inner reality to the transcendent which lay *outside* the everyday world. Frost locates reality *inside* the everyday world, and this is at once the substance and meaning of his parables. They take their form in the natural mysteries of experiences. They are generally rustic in subject matter and realistic in attitude. They deal directly with the everyday world. They are, moreover, dual in their levels of meaning — the literal and the evocative — but their symbolism is not conscious and deliberate; it is natural, rising from insight into the usual and accustomed.

Unlike the Symbolists, Frost does not use language in a peculiarly private speech. His idiom is his own, certainly, but we are aware that he is trying to establish a correspondence with us, as though our re-

action were important to him. "You come, too" is a form of invitation that indicates the intimate *rapport* between Frost and his public. His language is similar in its personal directness and intelligibility. Finical poets and critics will not always find his friendly correspondence to their liking. They are less stimulated by the intelligible use of language than by novelties in self-expression and *extraordinary* associational use of words, as in the poetry of Crane, Stevens, Eliot, Pound, or Cummings.

Frost is aware that words soon become devitalized when carelessly used. This realization has, however, not impelled him to try to vitalize language by liberating words from their normal associations as Rimbaud and Hart Crane have done. He renews words by selection and precision, and, like Wordsworth before him, the tonal rhythm of man speaking to man. He once defined poetry as "the renewal of words,"[13] which is accurate when renewal implies effort, craftsmanship and intelligence. Frost renews words in a more conventional, the Symbolists in a more unconventional, way. If his language is rarely eloquent, neither is it strained and tortured as Hart Crane's so frequently is. It is true, nevertheless, the penalty for clarity is sometimes commonplaceness, a penalty which is annulled when the mood or idea or feeling is evoked with intensity.

In his parables Frost uses the descriptive method to evoke the idea. The Symbolists, rejecting the descriptive method and the literal level, evoke the mood or idea or feeling through language used in a suggestive way. There is a greater range of communication in the former. The latter is restricted since the aim is to communicate unique personal feelings in nuanced, not exact, language. *"Oh! la nuance seule fiance,"* exclaimed Verlaine, *"La rêve au rêve et la flute au cor!"*

The attitudes which these poetical parables express are generated by inner, not outer, change. This is the obvious implication in the statement: "They would not find me changed from him they knew/ Only more sure of all I thought was true." His poetry reflects organic inner change. What Frost considers true has depended upon many complex factors, and especially upon those experiences to which he has inwardly reacted. The essence of his experience is the progressive strengthening of self-belief. Living for him has been a purification of personal quality; writing has been a clarification of reality. The subsidence of living and writing is a kind of uncommon sense we call wisdom.

---

[13] Talk with Robert Frost, South Shaftsbury, Vt., May, 1931.

His uncommon sense takes on significance in the twentieth century. Henry Adams described our age as one of multiplicity. The events in the epoch since the latter's death have made his observations appear like gross understatements. To W. H. Auden it is "the age of anxiety." Pablo Picasso's modernistic paintings are considered as symbolic of a prevalent hysteria, and Santayana's description of the universe as "an equilibrium of idiocies" is regarded by some as far from extreme. Frost, who has always believed in "making form in little bits of clarity,"[14] is sensitively aware of contemporary confusion, but, as he says "everyone should hold his own confusion."[15] This is exactly the impression his life and poetry make upon one. He has been able to contain personal confusion, and also the confusion of a disordered world, and continue to make form in little bits of clarity. Rigorous discipline is equally apparent in form as in content. By imposing form on material he gives a sure sense of creative authority. "Order," says Thomas Traherne, "the beauty even of beauty is." Such is the beauty of Frost's poetical parables.

[14] From a talk with Frost at Bread Loaf, Vermont, July 21, 1947.
[15] *Ibid.*

CONTRIBUTORS

JAMES BLISH is editor of a trade newspaper and lives on Staten Island. Though he has contributed articles to *Politics,* "Song as Song" is his first published poem.

REGINALD L. COOK is Director of the Bread Loaf School of English.

ROBERT CREELEY lives at Cambridge, Mass., and is working on a novel.

ARTHUR GREGOR is an engineer living in New York City and a contributor to *Poetry* and the *Saturday Review of Literature.*

HOWARD GRIFFIN of New York published a book of verse, *Cry Cadence,* two years ago.

ZYGMUNT HAUPT is a Polish writer and painter now living in New Orleans.

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS, of the Notre Dame English Department and the editorial board of *Poetry,* will offer his second book of poems, *A Fountain in Kentucky,* in 1950.

RALPH ROBIN's first published story is in this issue. He lives in Washington, D. C.

MARTIN SCHOLTEN teaches English at Toledo University. Scheduled for early publication is *A Later Shore,* his first volume of poetry.

HOWARD P. VINCENT, of the Illinois Institute of Technology, is the author of *The Trying Out of Moby-Dick.*

EUDORA WELTY, now traveling abroad, published her fifth work of fiction, *The Golden Apples,* in the summer of 1949.

ZYGMUNT HAUPT:

Wanda

When the King got the news
He arrived with six horses —
Will you love me, beautiful Cracovienne?

she was singing.

I can imagine how my aunt with her tight, narrow lips, stiff and erect in her black frock sitting in the armchair embroidering something, slowly turned her head.

"It is vulgar, what you are singing — " I heard.

Her house was separate and alone like a sullen rock on the flat soil. We had no connection with anyone in the city. My father spent his whole day in his bank; he even went there in the evening, and passing his window in the building I could see his forehead in the light of the lamp when he was at his desk.

The way to and from the bank was the only way he went on foot. If he had to go somewhere else he took our carriage. We had a pair of horses, a bay gelding and a gray stallion, and a heavy victoria with gray corduroy seats. He had a driver whose name was Michael Okszanski, a little stupid and shy boy who was in the artillery of General Zeligowski during the last foray in Lithuania and came back from this war an invalid. In the back of his head he had a kind of hole, an incompletely healed wound. My father didn't like him and from time to time bullied him and it didn't have a cheering effect on the slow and backward servant.

My father thought that since I was such a ne'er-do-well I should help him in this banking business, and he brought home fat accounting books in which I had to draw lines with a ruler, or some old paper from which I had to make envelopes for reasons of economy. I hated this work and, degraded and bitter, I drew the lines, leaf after leaf in the fat books, or made the envelopes in my room upstairs, and from there I heard their voices.

The hangman arrived in his red,
Cracovienne in green —

she was singing again.

My aunt stopped her work and started a tirade.

"It is vulgar, what you are singing. Do you think that I don't know that you were visiting the Misses Domorecki this morning? Is their company of little lower-middle class girls so suiting you in its flavor that you must import it here?"

The Misses Domorecki, girlish and flowering in their hand-embroidered petticoats, were the daughters of a well-to-do butcher and hog merchant, and they attracted her very much.

She tried heroically to defend the lost position.

"They are very nice girls and why am I better than they? . . . Because I am in the boarding school of the Benedictine order."

My aunt was stronger. "The vulgarity of it is that you gravitate to the infatuating little village atmosphere of their girlishness and dreams. This is undignified and unsuitable and —" my aunt was irritated — "and don't introduce it here, if I may implore you. That is to be slack, and, if you would be well-bred, the first condition of it is self-control and proper choice."

"Choice of what?"

"Choice of style. Good-breeding, that means style."

"Is it life — style?"

My aunt responded without hesitation and with iron consequence.

"Yes, life is style."

"I don't want style . . . It is indifferent to me, what style I will have."

"It is not indifferent, or it would be indifferent whether you are a lady or a hussy . . ."

Mazgaj began to bark in the garden and made the talking unintelligible. Afterwards, I heard:

"I beg you not to offend me."

"Don't be ridiculous."

"Oh, I know I was an undesired child."

I passed her on the steps when, leaving my work, I stepped down to the room where my father was. Eluding any chance of my intervention, my aunt spoke the first:

"You released Mazgaj from his chain and he will again ferret in the garden and break the tomato plants. Your father doesn't like it."

Mazgaj was a bastard out of the pointer bitch by some kind of mongrel. He inherited from her her beautiful features and from him his vulgar rough coat and his hooligan's humor.

In the morning he had been scowling and dragging his chain, and

by some miracle the catch of the chain opened and by the same miracle snapped at his hind legs and caught him at the dog's Achilles tendon. He could have torn it completely, but I held him and in spite of the fact that from a blind pain he bit me deeply in my hand I released him, and now, happy and forgetful of his not-so-distant despair, he ran around the garden breaking the tomato plants.

We did sympathize, this Mazgaj and I, but I was pushing him away from me. I didn't like this friendship between a dog and a man, it seemed to me a little disgusting, actually he was simply an animal. It had this result, that I was uneven in my attitude to him, once friendly, the next time cold, and probably I will never forget the astonished look in the eyes of Mazgaj, of loyal Mazgaj, meeting such a kind of hesitation, human lameness.

* * *

We were sitting upstairs in my room. I was trying to write a poem. I had in my head a dim disposition and it didn't disturb me that she was sitting on my bed and respectfully observing me, sitting so, over my sheet of paper.

But the poetry wasn't coming. I had the title and the last line and a few assonances which didn't have very much taste for me.

The theme of it was to be a dream, a dream of someone who is dreaming that he has poisoned himself with cyanide and then wakes up with the awful impression of this. So — how is it with this cyanide? Madly lethal thing! They say that a milligram of it is sufficient to kill a man. How much? 0.005? The title! "0.005 Cyanide." It would with its pedantic matter-of-fact formality underline the modernistic form of the verse with the accurateness of the ciphers and the magic of Arabic numerals and so on.

These agonies seemed suspicious to me and I couldn't start at all.

She was losing her respect for me, she had too much sense of humor to contemplate for so long a time the naiveté of verse and she was bored.

"So — read what you have written."

"Don't interrupt me."

"What are these modern verses — it is so easy, these . . . On the gray blanket of sky the mother-of-pearl button of a moon —" she was teasing me.

I shouldn't be cross with her, it was so pleasant that she was in here. I gave up the whole affair. I crumpled the paper, making a ball of it, and I started to smear on it eyes, nose, mouth, and the effect

of it was the "tsantsas," the prepared Indian heads from the Amazon river.

"Have you seen, really, have you seen these tsantsas?"

"Yes, I have seen them in the collection of Captain Rupp," I said. "He was at the Equator, and from there he brought them. They are really dainty, the head as little as a child's fist, with closed eyes, and lips laced with colored fringe, and hair — Indian hair, black with beautiful parrot's feathers plaited in. One head was so small that you could wear it in your buttonhole."

"How do they do it? Are they really genuine?"

"You know, they simply take a whole head, then they dry it, they stuff it with something, they prepare it, and so it shrinks like this."

She shivered.

I tried to awe her more — such stupid satisfaction.

"Those who prepare it are the Indians, Jivaros, but when there began to be a big demand for these heads there were the forgers imitating such manufactures. A specialist has to find out if the head is genuine or a cheat, and sometimes he discovers that such a smoked tsantsas was at one time the head of a white woman."

"This is awful."

But it was a grand effect, and the exoticness of the far-away Amazon, Orinoco, and Rio Negro floated in a jungle over the roofs in the afternoon dust of the little village.

* * *

The house was built of wood, of strange design, my father's dilettante design — a combination of Swiss chalet, bourgeois villa, and Empire manor house. Although it wasn't so old, the green of the garden made it look older. The ground it was built on was low and moist, and fungus moldered the wood in the long dark nights.

My father was a dilettante of genius in many directions, among others in gardening and pomology. Long before erecting the house he had planted a lot of fruit trees, some of them of excellent variety, and fastened to their branches by rusty wire were little wooden tags on which their names were carefully written in Latin. In spite of manuring, pruning, and chemical spraying, worms embedded themselves in the trees, and each harvest offered a collection of enormous red and worm-eaten apples. Around the garden a hedge of lilacs and raspberries made a wall between house and street. In the yard, partly paved with stone and partly covered with sand, stood a long stable, a garage, a laundry, separated from them a pig sty, and a large well

made in a concrete circle. I remember how the well was drilled and the concrete forms went up, one after another — but the result was that the unskilled specialist made it crooked. Unfortunately the water in the well was on a level with the water in the river that flowed in a ravine behind the barracks. It differed little from the river water — tepid, muddy, sweet-tasting; yet it was used for everything, for cooking and laundering and drinking.

As we sat in the garden on a hot summer morning, we were perfectly isolated from the outside world behind the green wall. The heart-shaped, dark-green, shiny leaves of the lilacs reflected the blue sky, the rose bushes on the lawn were fluffy with their thorns, and there came from them the sweet fragrance of rose petals. The walls of the house seemed to suck in the moisture of the earth from the vine tendrils of a Virginia creeper. Under the eaves the swallows made their nests and flew to and fro, their droppings staining the wood below.

We sat under the canopy of green leaves. I was reading Carlyle's *Heroes,* and we talked from time to time. With a key which I found in my pocket I scratched a design on the leather lining of my riding breeches, and it was easy to wipe it out with my hand, so soft was the suede.

Along the dusty road a machine-gun squadron was returning from exercise. The lancers' summer uniforms were almost white from washing and stained on the backs with the oil which protected their carbines. Through the lilacs I could see them riding in threes and driving pack horses. They began to sing in chorus after they had passed.

From our bench we noticed at the far end of our garden Franciszek Salezy, the gardener. We called him "The Man from Kamchatka." We invented nicknames for everyone around us, so that our chats had the character of a secret code. The teller and only clerk in my father's bank was named Reyowski, but to us he was "The Snout." We called my father Paul although his real name was Stefan. The prelate Kunaszowski was "Tertium Non Datur" and Doctor Goldfisch "Solange."

This Franciszek Salezy had been in Kamchatka as a prisoner of war during the whole of World War I. In the very beginning of it, in August, 1914, he had been mobilized as a Austrian militiaman and hadn't even got out of his town. When the Russians neared it, the little detachment of militia retreated to the forest on the neigh-

boring hills and, because it was a sultry day, his comrades sent Franciszek Salezy, the native of the place, to get some beer in town. There he got caught by the first Cossack patrol and then was sent to the prisoner-of-war camp at the other end of the world, at Kamchatka. After four years beyond the polar circle Franciszek Salezy lost all his teeth from scurvy — that's why he looked like a very old man despite not being so old.

Principally "The Man from Kamchatka" was the gardener, but a few years past he had made a discovery — he had discovered Portland cement. More than with plants he was busy with his concrete constructions. He would ask my father for some money to get half a paper bag of cement, mix it with sand, gravel, and water, and get busy with his concrete work; steps, drains, canals, curbs around our house were always in the state of correction and repair. Rough planks protected fresh construction and when he undid these forms there appeared a surface of concrete with perfectly stamped-in wood grain as if built out of petrified forests.

When rain came, we were astounded, disconcerted, and disappointed when, unexpected by Franciszek Saleszy but according to the laws of nivellation, the rainwater, in defiance of his irrigation system, flowed across, creating cañons and colorados of mud, carrying grass and weeds and flooding the garden in unexpected places with puddles and pools. He never grasped the caprices of these floods.

She said to me, "Show me your hand. It is Mazgaj who bit you. Does it hurt? Do you know that there at the Benedictine Convent I had such a story which I didn't tell back home and the Benedictine Demoiselles were — noo! — discreet, but still what should I have to hear of reproach? They have there awful watchdogs, Alsatians, and in the night they are released and they run around the walls of the convent and bark and — you know, they had the little ones, they were keeping them in the cellar of the convent — and I was stupid and I said to Maryska Zuber that I wouldn't be afraid to go down to see these pups, and Maryska, such an idiot, she always believes in me — she made talk around about it, and the others provoked me and dared me, all, naturally, safely on the second floor behind the window panes, and I alone in the yard, and I was terrified, and I was going down the steps and it was dark there and before I heard the whining of the pups these Alsatians jumped at me and I was retreating up the steps, dragging on me these two beasts, I wonder that I didn't go insane, and up there I fainted and afterwards, when I was many

weeks in bed, bandaged, do you think that any one of them pitied me — not at all! Even false in the presence of the Demoiselles they said, 'You see, you wished it on yourself.' Why is all this like this?"

"They didn't notify anyone here, these Demoiselles," I said comfortingly.

"They are not like that and you know they are all of very good family — to get to be one of them you have to have an enormous dowry and there are not many like that. They are very old."

"What are they like? Is it a very strict order?" I asked.

"Oh, our Mother Abbess, she is very old. Can you imagine, she has never seen a railway train in her life, because when she got in, there weren't yet railways and after that she was never out. I beg your pardon, two years ago she went to Pohrebyszcza to see the estate but she drove in a coach with the blinds drawn."

"Are they like that?"

"You know, they wear a kind of enormous medieval headdress. You can see it in our church on the tombstone of the wife of the Paladine of Belz. And the Mother Abbess on ceremonial occasions holds a kind of bishop's crook. She is supposed to have broiled thrushes for her dinner —" she was laughing.

"What! Those altruistic thrushes who stuff themselves with berries and one hasn't even to clean them before broiling?"

"So they say. And the other time, Maryska and I, we sneaked into the choir of the church to see the initiation. We were terrified, we made our way secretly to the choir, and there on the pulpit is branded a devil's claw — where the devil put his hand in testimony when it was God's judgment on the Standard Bearer of Krasiczyn — you don't think I believe in this folk lore, but I was terribly afraid. So this initiation is blood-curdling — she was in white with a veil like a bride and she was lying in the shape of a cross on the pavement and they spread over her a black shroud and they put heavy candelabra at each corner of it and the priest was singing Requiem and these songs — I thought that I would go back to the convent hospital after this mad evening. That is a kind of death during your lifetime."

"And what do you girls talk about among yourselves in the convent?" I asked to change the theme.

She laughed. "About what? Do you know — as a rule about boys. It sometimes makes me feel ashamed . . ."

* * *

We were silent again and it was very hot.

On the garden path in the sunlight appeared the cat. Generations after generations of them succeeding each other and this transmuting of life went on almost under our eyes. At first there was a fluffy baby cat, rolling over the carpets, for whom the whole world was a unique and exciting object of play and challenge. Afterwards, it grew up into an indifferent and cold miniature tiger with its elastic movements and the nervous twitching of its tail, or for the greater part of the day a knot of dreams and drowsiness in its closed, retired life. Afterwards, the cat got heavy and from the litter we selected one, and the rest Franciszek Salezy destroyed in defiance of the ideal euthanasia of the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals. And there grew a new generation, and the genealogical tree of the tribe budded into a new branch.

The gooseberry eyes of the cat in the glare of the sun showed pupils reduced to thin slits. To us sitting in the shadow it seemed that the cat approaching on the path had feet that with their tender pads swelled into lion's paws and in the round head stretched the jaws of a cave tiger. Scale — how confusing is scale! Don't let yourself be deceived by scale! Who will come to help you, who will measure proportions for you when the antediluvian tiger opens his dreadful maw with yellow fangs!

Or — this is the leopard. Beware of the spotted leopard! This is the symbol of voluptuousness, in the soft rapacious poising of the paw, in the readiness to spring, in the glittering of his coat when the fur hardly covers the flicker of his muscles. It is a sudden and felling spring. Isn't this spotted leopard the symbol of wild covetousness or is it in myself? Wasn't it, before, drowsing in me and now stands up and is ready to jump?

"Pussy, pussy — " she bent, playing with her fingers, trying to lure the pet. I sighed with relief.

And the cat turned, glancing lazily at us, and in a long, flat jump mounted the fence. I began again to draw with my key a kind of leopard spots on the lining of my riding breeches and very quickly to wipe them out with my hand . . . .

* * *

Then she said to me, "I feel queer — tell me something about Indians or so . . ."

"You know, I have been to a picture of Eisenstein's about Mexico. Actually it was about a Mexican fiesta, some kind of a Mexican All

Souls' Day. It is the most joyful holiday in the world — on the theme of death. Imagine a kind of carnival fair, all the young people are dancing, they are thronging before the booths, the bells of the churches are ringing, but the masks on the faces of the playing people represent the death's head; on the wooden poles of the booths there are swinging and jumping dolls and marionettes shaped as skeletons; the dancing harlequins when you pull the string are the most ironical and amusing skeletons. This Eisenstein is a master of cinema direction. You can see the little papoose charmed with the gift it has, and the toy is called 'My Little Funeral,' with a priest, a little hearse, and the mourning marionettes, and the little casket opens its lid like a snuff box to show its contents — a miniature skeleton . . . The little fat papoose is devouring an enormous cake iced and made up with fruits in the shape of a death's head, and the grown-ups, drunk with their national drink — I think the name is pulque — dance and sing and laugh at the death which they consider one shouldn't be afraid of, the death which is friendly and homely. They are used to her with her pictures on the stone coffins of the Mayas and the Aztecs, and you see it has sense, this kind of mixture of life and death, because where is the border between life and death? . . . What's the matter?"

She knotted her brows, smiled a smile, and was thoughtful, and suddenly she fainted.

"What's the matter?" I was really frightened and couldn't move, then I forced myself to run for water. I was unnerved and I spilled water on her and she was very heavy and I couldn't move her. Then Franciszek Salezy helped me, mumbling to himself, "God protect us! — it is nothing." We sat her on the bench and she opened her eyes, blinking in the sun, and tried to say something, and said only, "I am not afraid."

The color came back into her cheeks, and she was laughing, happy, very happy.

* * *

But in the afternoon Dr. Goldfisch, who was called and consulted, stood on the steps on his way home, and he said, troubled, pinching his fat Semitic lower lip with his fingers, "This fainting? Oh, that is nothing, it is simply a ladies' affair. Do I say that it is something serious? But, not to provoke bad luck, why don't you send her to a specialist in lung diseases?" He finished the consultation with these few questions.

HOWARD GRIFFIN:

Conversation on Cornelia Street

Dialogue with W. H. Auden

I: Would you rather have lived at an earlier time when men knew less, when there was no police force, no plumbing?

A: I would not. If one thinks in terms of happiness or love, human behavior certainly has not improved through the ages, but if one thinks in terms of knowledge, power and potential for good, one must say: There has been an advance.

I: You mean at least we have technological advantages?

A: Yes. The power-instruments. — You cannot have advances in science without having the good and bad, without being given a choice. It is always up to men to decide how they are going to use what they have. With each new invention, the question of free will is resurrected. The first invention of all was the apple, — divine knowledge which caused the trouble. The story of Chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis is a myth to explain history. One must acknowledge its poetic truth for human beings still seem much like Adam and Eve, blaming things on each other, and desiring to be gods. Out of their monstrous vanity human creatures want to be their own cause. Adam succumbed to the temptation to eat the apple, — but not out of appetite . . . The story of the Fall has to be told in mythical terms because it is what conditions history. In Genesis we do not have a race of people but the first man and woman, and the first thing they do is eat of the tree, an act that begins time and loses them this innocence. Civilization in itself remains neutral and ambiguous. All forms of knowledge and power have two sides. As temptations, they can make a man behave either much better or much worse.

I: You make it quite clear that knowledge, though it can make one more responsible, say, or more conscious, cannot make one choose good or reject evil.

A: Yes, it seems to me that a man learns to choose the good by desiring it. By sincerely wishing to be good, a reciprocity is set up between act and intent, metaphorically similar to the mirrors in the *Paradiso.*

U. OF I.
LIBRARY

I: In this ethical realm, does the artist have an advantage?

A: Although the practice of an art can make a man more human perhaps, it has no power to change malice into virtue. For all art is the production of an artifact, a thing, an act often performed more ably by the laborer. Since he is a narcissist, the artist loves to play a part. Conceivably he may find himself in the role of a villain and be fascinated by the spectacle of himself in this guise. You may ask how one goes about changing. . . . well . . .

I: Yes. It is hard to say just what I mean. Rilke closed his poem *Archäischer Torso Apollos* with "For there is no place that does not see you. You must change your life." — In other words he seemed to believe that a profound aesthetic experience could cause a man to really change and rededicate his life.

A: Although aesthetic powers give one pleasure, they do not make one good. How does one change? . . . One can look ahead, one can say: I *should do* this. Will I do it? — A part of the mind looks on; a part decides. Also, one must not discount Grace.

I: You mean supernatural intervention — the light that appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus?

A: Not really supernatural, at least not in the sense of miraculous. It may be perfectly natural. It depends on an intensification of normal powers of sensitivity and contemplation. Matthew was lured from the ballotbox by a word of Christ's but only because the command was spoken in a certain way to the right man. True enough, at a particular time Augustine heard the boy chanting "tolle legge, tolle legge" and in his sorrow became converted to Christianity but before that, we must remember, a long period of hesitation and psychological unrest occurred. Oftentimes these ethical changes are not as clear-cut as commentators would have us believe. All we know is: at one point something pushes people over the edge and in these changes suffering plays a greater part than knowledge. The metamorphosis often occurs in the early thirties. You agree, don't you, that any kind of theological persuasion plays no role in these moral changes?

I: I believe that usually comes later, — a post-intellectualization of belief.

A (taking a book down from a shelf): Caesarius has some wonderful things to say about this. Listen. . . . "Some seem to be converted by the direct call and inspiration of God, others by nothing but an instigation from the spirit of evil, some by a certain levity of mind but the greatest number are converted by the ministry of others, as by the

word of exhortation, the power of prayer or the effect of example. A vast number are drawn to the order by different exigencies, such as sickness or poverty, or reaction from danger, or by the terror of hell, or by the longing for the heavenly country . . ."

I: Yes, the "longing for the heavenly country." I believe that the idea of a more perfect state exists as a pattern of human consciousness, not merely as an eschatologic assumption.

A: The Garden of Eden idea serves to remind human beings that they are fallible and have to be redeemed. All men are erring; consequently one would not put any man in office unconditionally; all tenures and cumulative wages would be checked. To say that men are sometimes converted because of a "longing for the heavenly country" may mean (1) that they conceive of monastic life as a "soft escape" (2) that the idea of a lost happiness really forms part of their thought. In 18th century romantic landscape art, one finds a manifestation of this. Within a huge natural setting, the human figure is dwarfed, but the effect is not one of real terror, but a kind of delicious shock. In this school nature is portrayed as friendly, clean, clear, etc. without bugs, snakes and prefabricated houses. Rousseau's cosmology is a version of the Golden Age. Another aspect of it is the view of D. H. Lawrence, who draws a contrast between the reflective mental consciousness and the dark gods of the blood. We can see the feelings that would bring this about: In an industrial civilization we live a certain type of life. During our summer vacations we visit a community of simple people whose degree of selfconsciousness (as distinguished from belief) is not very great. We observe that they are happier than we are; that they behave better. . . One should contrast this idea of an idyllic primitiveness with the school to which Lucretius, Vergil and Hobbes belonged that conceived of the original state of man as savage, and posited civilization as the metamorphosis of the brutal and ignorant into an ordered, civil world, a change that was brought about, according to the myths, by Hercules, Prometheus and Tubal Cain.

I: What is the danger of the Golden Age view?

A: It leads not to conservatism, but to a kind of nihilism. A we-are-all-sunk feeling; one had better withdraw. The withdrawal can take various forms: the attempt to live in a simpler manner or the way-out of drinking or any other means to reduce selfconsciousness . . . Surely it is very easy for the Marxist to point out that this view has a natural appeal to a person who himself belongs to a dying class. On the other hand, the Hobbesian picture appeals to people who like

power either of the reactionary or the forward-looking kind. Since they posit primitivism as a time of disorder, they put the Golden Age not at the beginning but at the other end and they relate themselves causally to the achievement of this millenium. The Church describes the world starting out with the Garden, declining and progressing finally to the City of God. The danger lies in the probability that the institution will consider itself causally and by its nature related to the Divine City. The free, non-aristocratic view believes in the weakness and perfectibility of man divorced from the monist approach that progress will be accomplished by means of any political or religious device.

I: Do you think a pessimistic view of human nature necessitates a strictly stratified society?

A: No. A certain amount of distinction between classes may be good. Only those should rule who are capable of ruling. In society there are places for benevolent rule and for submission but the submission should be sincere and the rule honest. Ideally in a democracy anyone can get to the top and rule but this, of course, does not work out in practice. Actually the democratic system means that everyone is managed by particularly endowed persons. It is more like what Steffens called "A government of the people by gentlemen for the business men."

I: When we started out, I assumed we would get around to the question of free will. From remarks you made earlier, I assume you disagree with the priestly interpretation of the Fall as a symbol of the birth of morality.

A: Yes, I see it as a symbol of the human desire to be free, to be autonomous.

I: I would like to go into this. You compared the temptation of the apple to the temptation of power-media, pointing out that, far from being curses or bogies, these essentially neutral objects may be presented to us repeatedly in many guises to cause us, wayward as we are, to make a right choice. If this is so, it is the mechanics of the choice which bothers me.

A: Choosing is an extremely rare phenomenon. Human beings think they choose when, oftentimes, they obey an instinct, act gratuitously, or follow the suggestions of others. Seldom, for instance, does a man determine his lifework; it determines him. The most difficult thing for a man to succeed in doing is what he has a real talent for. And although the cliché of the fairy tale is: The prince *chose* his

wife, in real life no one chooses a wife, as the wife knows.

I: What happens when an individual loses the power to make a real decision between two alternatives?

A: He becomes a member of the crowd. If one asks why he cannot choose, one must say that a person in order to choose must believe in aesthetic values in terms of which a choice becomes meaningful. If persons cannot choose between rival loves, they cannot form a community. This has nothing to do with education, because knowing a lot does not make one believe in anything. Collectively knowing a lot does not give people a real function in society.

I: Why did you say in the *Reader,* "The weakest point in Greek ethics is the analysis of Choice."

A: When human creatures and the world are new, they do not desire what they consider the restriction of choice, not seeing beyond the idea of pleasure. The function of youth is to go everywhere, do everything. In the early Greek myths almost all choices are made between essentially material objects: Paris must choose between the control of Asia, power in war and a pretty wife. In order for this to involve a real decision, these things are rightly equated. Marpessa must choose between Apollo and Idas, between two types of pleasure. Parallelly, Ulysses must choose between Calypso and Penelope, and he makes essentially the same choice as Marpessa. Penelope must choose between her father and husband, between two symbols of authority. But with the Christian era we get away from these easy choices, which are merely the hesitation between two enjoyments. Christ and St. Paul taught people that one might, one sometimes *should,* desire the physically disadvantageous, that, in other words, one might choose out of spite or in defiance. In a world-scheme that posited pain and endurance as values, one might choose suffering. Realistically, — although not gratuitously — Christ *chose* to be delivered to the priests and be killed (as we see in Chapter 20 of Matthew). In the first century A.D. it begins to appear that to choose, with a deliberate exercise of the will rather than reason, contumely, defeat and renunciation may be a kind of success. Therefore what Dostoyevsky called the "most advantageous advantage" might be, really, loss and exclusion.

I: Someone has said that, though men live most of their lives at the will of others, it always remains within their power to choose their deaths, and thus to exercise autonomy. According to this, the most personal act a man can commit is his own death.

A: Yes, but not the deaths of others. That remains pretty im-

personal . . . We use the insectile word "extermination" to describe it.

I: There seemed to be great gratuitousness about the mass killings of the Jews. Hitler had to keep his men occupied. It appeared to be a decision made out of frivolity; a question of: What shall we do next? Let's kill the Jews.

A: Although he seemed to be always telling other people what to do, Hitler's acts were determined by compulsion and desire for prestige. Men like Hitler, Napoleon and Richard III contrive to make their surroundings sufficiently exciting so that they are sustained in a *state of passion,* which dictates what they will do. People like Hitler have a hunger for complete mastery and when things begin to go wrong, then there is nothing for them to do but wish their death. The Hitler type is able to choose for others, but incapable of self-choice and he must go on arousing enemies because their fact proves that he exists. When we read of the night of the long knives, the SS slogan "Heads must roll," the Rohm purge, etc., we see that the Nazi leaders contrived to do evil consciously for its own sake in order to demonstrate their objective reality. They were demonics.

I: How do you define *a demonic character?*

A: A demonic character is one who is impelled into action for the sake of action. He is rash, irresponsible — not mischievous, for that implies malice whereas a demonic may set out with the intention to do good, to save a town, to win the day.

I: Such a person as Joan of Arc?

A: Or Hitler. A person with a sense of fate, even a love of fate as strong-willed people often have. Once they get started they cannot stop. Their fatality is being what they are; they are their own disease . . . Because circumstances impelled him into action, most of Hitler's acts can not be explained logically . . . The extermination of the Jews; the mass murder of children; killing to music. Essentially the Nazis were bored. Ennui causes people to take a leap into action. Distrusting words, believing in deeds, the Hitler type uses language as an actor, that is, to deceive. By language he makes people want what he wants them to want. At first, he seems to have great success; others succumb to him . . .

I: And this is the moment of great danger, isn't it, the moment of infatuation?

A: Yes . . . For the dictator, war is a good thing; then he feels wanted. He has a hunger to be needed. A war provides people with a negative sense of self — enough self to destroy. What Hitler,

Napoleon and Alexander lacked was a consciousness of their finiteness, a lack that can be disastrous. Many leaders of history, revered by their people, are moved by criminal folly and are guilty.

I: I think of Byron's reference to Wellington: "You are the best of cut-throats . . ."

A: Wellington was just an opportunist. It is difficult to find real demonics among the English . . . too lymphatic . . . Achilles is a demonic: Odysseus, an opportunist. In advance Achilles knew he would not return from the Trojan War . . . If a person knows his limitations (and, although the English are conceited, they are not proud in the grand worldly way) he cannot be a demonic.

I: Roland is a demonic.

A: His crime of rashness is a crime. When they are caught in the rearguard action, Oliver wisely tells his friend to ask for help, but Roland, thinking of the praise he will receive in France, refuses. He will not blow the horn because of what his parents might think of him. This is all very well but his pride involves the deaths of others. A glory-hound. He speaks of booty and urges his friend to battle. We see in the *Chanson* that the relation of men in war is one of passion united by fear. How does Roland confront death? In dying he does not think of his fiancee but of his reputation and conquest. Essentially renown in war is an ego satisfaction on a level with success in business.

I: In the old legends the hero claims invulnerability except for one spot. Does this form a kind of revenge against those who set themselves up as gods?

A: If a person claims to be immune, he is hiding from himself the fact that he is human. *Hubris* involves oversecurity whereas the basis of pride is lack of security, anxiety and defiance. Only men of great power can be guilty of *hubris*. The demonic believes that power comes from him and this arouses the envy of the gods; for this he receives punishment. Knowing he is not a god, he wills to make himself one. Pride can de defined as a form of despair. The lower form involves willing not to be oneself. The higher form: not willing to be oneself.

I: The Greeks restricted the sense of guilt. In other words, the member of a Greek chorus could not suffer from *hubris*.

A: Exactly. The Christian tradition defines pride as a more general thing. In fact, no one is exempt. Pride is something any of us — no matter what our position — may suffer from. This view largely changes the role of fate which becomes less important than character,

personal or social. A person with this view cannot be called a demonic. He is not in love with fate, neither does he fight fate. Accepting his finiteness, he takes the moment and what he makes of it depends on his decision.

I: The demonic is he who embraces and fights with his fate as Jacob with the angel?

A: Yes . . . One of the most wonderful of the cartoons in *The New Yorker* showed a little man struggling madly with a huge octopus issuing from a manhole. An utterly passive crowd surrounded him. On the fringe of the crowd two men — Charles Addams characters — were walking by, ignorant of the cause of the disturbance. One carried a folded umbrella that looked exactly like a magician's wand. He turned to the other with the remark "It doesn't take much to attract a crowd in New York." — The individual struggling with fate is hemmed in by the crowd, some of whom say to themselves: Thank God, it isn't me. Others think: Nothing exciting ever happens to me! And the two men on the periphery assume that it doesn't take much to make people look; therefore they'll do the opposite; they'll solve the problem by not looking. How did the German people react to Hitler? Some thought: He is suffering for us. See how he suffers! Others thought: He is full of power. I envy him! — Whereas America and England turned away and refused to look. . . .

HOWARD P. VINCENT:

From the Melville Archives

Journal of a Visit to London and the Continent by Herman Melville, 1849-1850. Edited by Eleanor Melville Metcalf. Harvard University Press.

Melville's Billy Budd. Edited by F. Barron Freeman. Harvard University Press.

On October 11, 1849, having finished his fifth novel, *White-Jacket,* Herman Melville sailed for England with the intention of obtaining the best possible sale of his book to an English publisher. During seventeen weeks and two days of

this trip he kept a journal, now in the Houghton Library of Harvard College. When Raymond Weaver wrote his *Herman Melville, Mariner and Mystic* (1921), he had access to the two little notebooks and used them freely in recounting this phase of Melville's life. But despite his generous quotation, about two-thirds of the journal remained unpublished in any form and was known only to the few scholars permitted to examine it, or to those who had studied the typescript of Luther Mansfield's doctoral dissertation, *Herman Melville, New Yorker*. But at last it has been transcribed in full and thoroughly edited by Mrs. Eleanor Melville Metcalf, granddaughter of the author and donor of the bulk of the Melville manuscripts in the Houghton Library.

If it be more than a mere list of sights, the travel journey of any first rate artist is always of interest. Especially is this true of Melville's, which not only lists but also fills out his sensuous and intellectual impressions of sights along the way. To be sure, many of the jottings are generally not much more than shorthand, but once understood — and here a good editor, such as Mrs. Metcalf, is indispensable — this shorthand leads us to the mind and art of genius. Embedded in these notes, unpromising though some of them seem at hasty glance, are little nuggets for later assay, primarily in the short stories of the next few years and in *Moby-Dick*. But even without the notes, one gets in most of the journal entries a delightful impression of Herman Melville. One may appreciate almost at first hand what an excellent traveller he was. His was an alert eye, a retentive brain; his was a tolerant humor which made him appreciative of tribal peculiarities. But above all, his was a zest for life in its less pretentious moments. He could say with Sterne, whom he read on this trip, *"Vive la bagatelle."*

The journal is of course an indispensable reference work for the close student of Melville. It may profitably be used more than it has been — for instance, he who wants to study Melville's interest in art (certainly one of the more profitable "unworked" Melville topics) must turn to this journal. The editor of *White-Jacket* and *Moby-Dick* must pursue relentlessly the many leads of this book.

Mrs. Metcalf has done her work well. Her annotations are detailed — there are as many pages of notes as there are of journal — but they are not overloaded, and her short introduction carefully and modestly places Herman Melville, not the editor, in the foreground. Her skillful editing is all the more remarkable in that Mrs. Metcalf was not, until posed with this task, a trained scholar. She learned as she worked and she may be as pleased with her fine work as we are to have it for reading. The Harvard University Press has of course done well by the book. I have but one regret, and that is the abandonment of an early intention to have the Eaton portrait *in color* as the frontispiece. Possibly not just expense but the late date of the Eaton portrait made that inclusion unwarranted.

The Melville journal was one of a large body of manuscripts given to Mrs. Metcalf by her mother, Elizabeth Melville Thomas. Another manuscript in that now famous cake box was a novel left unpublished by Melville at his death. This novel was *Billy Budd*. Unfortunately, although the manuscript of *Billy Budd* was published in 1924, it was issued in an inaccurate transcript that left

the critic uncertain of crucial readings. It is embarrassing to criticize a Melville meaning if that meaning hangs on a key word which subsequent manuscript examination shows to have been misread. Now however, Dr. F. Barron Freeman has issued his long awaited text of the manuscript. Criticism of *Billy Budd* may really settle down to work — and has, as witness Freeman's own introduction, and the sections in Chase's and Stone's new books on Melville.

In preparing *Billy Budd* for the press, Dr. Freeman has done several important jobs and made some important discoveries. First of all he has given us a long studied text— whether it is the definitive text only a close comparison of his transcription and of the manuscripts can tell. He has discovered an initial version of the novel, a short story which he calls "Baby Budd, Sailor", as well as a short sketch, "Daniel Orme", which Melville omitted from the novel. He has brought forward new information about Melville's life during the years of retirement from the Custom House. He has studied Melville's use of sources dealing with the Spithead and the Nore mutinies, as well as with the more important Mackenzie case, structural core of *Billy Budd*. And finally, he has critically studied Melville's creative activity, through the manuscripts, during the composition of his last, and second greatest, novel. This is a lot accomplished, and accomplished well.

One question might be raised as to Dr. Freeman's symbols in his textual notes. The chief purpose of textual notes is to indicate what the manuscript itself is like. From a comparison of the facsimile facing page 262, one must conclude that his set of symbols is totally inadequate to serve this necessary purpose. For instance, the word "first" (line 6) is noted as "omitted in the earlier versions". A glance at the facsimile shows that it was caretted into the manuscript, but there is no indication whatsoever that it was caretted at a later date, and in fact it looks as though it were inserted by Melville at the time he was writing the entire line — thus it was not *omitted* from a previous version unless one uses the word "previous" over nicely. But even in the light of his own terms, Dr. Freeman is inconsistent, for later in the facsimile the word "could" (line 10) is similarly caretted in, above "never", but there is no note whatsoever about this, even as having been "omitted from a previous edition." Also, there is no indication that Dr. Freeman's readings "Judgment" and "fellow man" have been unnotedly changed from Melville's "Judgement" and "fellow-man". Small matters, but important. Or again, for "religion" (line 4) Dr. Freeman notes "religion itself", which does not tell that in the manuscript the word "itself" was *cancelled* by Melville. Finally, the manuscript situation at the bottom of the facsimile is in no satisfactory way indicated by the symbols employed in the footnotes. All of this is perhaps niggling but a careful textual scholar like Dr. Freeman might like to reconsider his symbols for a future edition. It is true that even the best symbolism is none too clear; anything less than the best is confusing.

What I have just said need not cast suspicion on the immense value of this new text of *Billy Budd,* and it certainly has nothing to do with the attractively written and thorough examination of biographical, scholarly, and critical problems connected with the book. *Melville's Billy Budd* is an important step in Melville scholarship.

A Note on Poets Recorded

Is the day ahead when a new collection of verse will be "published" on a long-playing record (or on wire or tape), read by the author or a skilled pinch-hitter coached by him? Poetry records have hitherto been supplementary to books, fractional, costly, and hard to come by. Through constant progress in record manufacture, however, it is not unimaginable that books may themselves become supplements — already one may buy Edith Sitwell's reading of the twenty poems in *Facade* on a ten-inch long-playing disc for $3.85, with the printed text tossed in.

Meanwhile, recognizing the absurdity of expecting Victor and Columbia to entrust poetry to readers less commercially surefire than Norman Corwin and Basil Rathbone (Millay is the only living American poet in the domestic catalogues), the Library of Congress is preparing the bulkiest and most satisfactory series of poets' recordings to date. (See page 62 for contents of the first five albums.) Though not long-playing, the discs are up-to-date in sound-engineering and are made of exceptionally quiet-surfaced plastic. They are relatively cheap and can be purchased singly as well as in albums. Mechanically they are far superior to the Harvard Vocarium records of T. S. Eliot (also on twelve-inch plastic, but gritty of surface, often dull in voice reproduction, and twice as expensive) and to the ten-inch shellac records of Auden, Cummings, Williams, MacLeish and others released by the National Council of Teachers of English.

The Library of Congress albums comprise the best poetry anthology in recent years. They lean Untermeyerishly toward offering too few selections by too many writers; they include too many poems chosen (by the poet or an advisor in the Library?) with brevity and with ease in reading too obviously in mind; they have thus far omitted Stevens and Frost and MacLeish and Schwartz and Berryman. But these are temporary complaints, possibly all to be erased as new albums are added to the series.

One's first reaction to hearing a poet read may be merely curiosity about his voice, his mannerisms, his dramatic flair, his confidence — as in the early thirties we herded to the talkies to discover how Garbo and Gary Cooper would *sound*. Does Warren have a drawl? Dr. Williams a bedside manner? Further listening provides a sense of knowing the poet better that is usually rewarding, sometimes distracting; and, in the end, a sense of knowing the poems better — the main thing — through study of the poet's inflection and timing.

Eliot has had a better chance than his contemporaries to demonstrate this process fully. Besides his magnificent readings of *The Waste Land* and *Ash Wednesday* for the Library of Congress, he has done a number of the shorter poems for Harvard Vocarium and *Four Quartets* for His Master's Voice. (Eventually some one may release excerpts from a recording of *Murder in the Cathedral* he made to guide actors in the film version.) An article by Harry Thornton Moore in the September, 1949, *Poetry* is recommended for comments on Eliot's reading and its enrichment of our response to his poems.

There are others who have contributed superbly to the Library of Congress project — Cummings, for instance, whose brilliance will overturn the chairs of many readers who have persistently regarded his work as trash or puzzle. There are some who read competently and listlessly, a few who are afflicted with

tenseness or flabbiness of voice. God save us from placing, as poetry records become more and more common, an undue emphasis on such failures and confusing the poet with the elocutionist.

K. Q.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS ALBUMS

ALBUM I.

P1. KATHERINE GARRISON CHAPIN: "Sky Over Taos" and six others.
P2. MARK VAN DOREN: "Civil War," "Return to Ritual," "The Single Hero," "Invincible," "The Unknown Army."
P3. W. H. AUDEN: "Alonso to Ferdinand," "Musee des Beaux Arts," "Refugee Blues."
P4. RICHARD EBERHART: "The Groundhog," "Dam Neck, Virginia" and two others.
P5. LOUISE BOGAN: "The Sleeping Fury," "The Alchemist" and four others.

ALBUM II.

P6. PAUL ENGLE: "West of Midnight" and four others.
P7. MARIANNE MOORE: "Rigorists," "Spenser's Ireland," Selections from "Virginia Britannia."
P8. ALLEN TATE: "Ode to the Confederate Dead," "Sonnets at Christmas 1934," "A Dream," "A Vision."
P9. JOHN GOULD FLETCHER: "Clipper Ships."
P10. JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN: "Second Sight," "Love in Particular," "Views of the Favorite Colleges."

ALBUM III. T. S. ELIOT.

P11. "The Waste Land." I. The Burial of the Dead. II. A Game of Chess.
P12. "The Waste Land." III. The Fire Sermon. IV. Death by Water.
P13. "The Waste Land." V. What the Thunder Said.
P14. "Ash-Wednesday" (Parts I-IV).
P15. "Ash-Wednesday" (Parts V-VI), "Landscapes," "Sweeney among the Nightingales."

ALBUM IV.

P16. W. C. WILLIAMS: "Peace on Earth," "Light-Hearted William," "Spring and All," "It is a Living Coral," "Queen-Anne's-Lace," "The Yachts."
P17. ROBERT PENN WARREN: "Terror," "Pursuit."
P18. E. E. CUMMINGS: "plato told him," "my father moved through dooms of love."
P19. ROBINSON JEFFERS: "Oh, Lovely Rock," "The Beaks of Eagles," "Ossian's Grave."
P20. THEODORE SPENCER: "The Phoenix" and four others.

ALBUM V.

P21. JOHN CROWE RANSOM: "Captain Carpenter," "Bells for John Whitesides' Daughter," "Janet Waking," "Here Lies a Lady."
P22. WILLIAM MEREDITH: "String Quartet," "Carrier," "Battlewagon," "Transport."
P23. YVOR WINTERS: "Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight," "John Sutter," "Time and the Garden," "The California Oaks."
P24. RANDALL JARRELL: "Lady Bates," "Stalag Luft."
P25. KARL SHAPIRO: "Elegy for a Dead Soldier."

To order any of the above records, address the Library of Congress, Reference Department, Music Division, Washington, D. C. Albums (5 12" records) cost $8.25. Single records cost $1.50. To the total of your order add:

1. 10% Federal tax.
2. Packing, postage and insurance, according to the following rate:

	East of the Mississippi	West of the Mississippi
1 album or from 1 to 5 records	$0.60	$0.85
2 albums or from 6 to 10 records	.70	1.15
3 albums or from 11 to 15 records	.95	1.65
4 albums or from 16 to 20 records	1.10	2.10
5 albums or from 21 to 25 records	1.25	2.40